THE THREE GARDENS.

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THE THREE GARDENS:

EDEN, GETHSEMANE, AND PARADISE;

OR,

MAN'S RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION.

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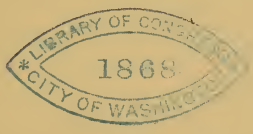

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER & CO.
1868.

BR121
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1868

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THERE are many theologies: only ONE CHRISTIANITY. The substance of Christianity is in those few related facts which are arranged around the person of JESUS CHRIST.

Revelation may not communicate all which curiosity might desire or philosophy attempt; but we recognise a wise design alike in its limitations and its disclosures. We intend no disrespect to dogmatic theology, when we institute the inquiry, now and then, whether we are not in danger of giving a greater prominence to philosophic speculation concerning the facts of the Christian system than to the facts themselves, many of which are palpable to the infidel as to the believer.

As to those prodigious feats of intellectual legerdemain by which Pantheism denies the personality of the

world's Creator and Redeemer, pretending that God and Christ are only syllogistic fabrications of the human soul; or the speculations of a later school, which, admitting the historical incidents of Christianity, judges them according to sense, making Baptism to mean nothing more than the virtue of personal ablution, and the Lord's Supper the wisdom of dietetics;* by such studious endeavors, on the one hand and the other to escape the obvious import of inspired Scripture, we are reminded of the elaborate effort of the Arch Tempter, on his first circumnavigation of our earth, as described by Milton, to keep himself in darkness—

"Cautious of day."

The present volume undertakes nothing more than to group together, in the simple and unpretending form of pastorly address—not of philosophic analysis—the principal facts which compose the Christian system. From whatever point of the circumference we start in the great circle of truth, each radius brings us to that focal centre—the life and mediation of JESUS CHRIST.

The author will be abundantly compensated, if the following pages should enliven the conviction in any

* Essence of Christianity, By Ludwig Feuerbach.

mind that the only source of hope and gladness for the human race is the Redemption of the Son of God — so that the whole of life should be made one "Lord's Day" of gratitude and joy, as George Herbert has beautifully expressed it: —

> "Can there be any day but this,
> Though many suns to shine endeavor?
> We count three hundred; but we miss:
> There is but *one*, and that one EVER.

NEW YORK, *March* 24, 1856.

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THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

MAN!

How vast a world is figured by a word!
A little word, a very point of sound,
Breathed by a breath, and in an instant heard;
Yet leaving that may well the soul astound,—
To sense a shape, to thought without a bound
For who shall here the mystery unclose
Of that great being symbolized in *man*?
His outward form seems but a speck in space
But what far star shall check the eternal race
Of one small thought that rays from out his mind?
For evil, or for good, still, still must travel on
His every thought, though worlds are left behind,
Nor backward can the race be ever run.

ALLSTON.

I.

MAN'S ORIGINAL CHARACTER AND CONDITION.

As the sun rises in a cloudless morning, the eastern hills and waters seem to be in contact with the sky; and, when it goes down in the west, the earth and the heavens appear once more to be blended together in a yet brighter effulgence. This world has had one "golden age;" and, when the circle of its eventful life is complete, it will certainly enjoy another.

In one of the galleries of Italy, there hangs a picture of an exiled nobleman. The artist has aimed to portray the most abject condition of a kingly nature. The hair is matted and dishevelled; the cheek pale and sunken; the dress worn and tattered; yet, through all this misery, depression, and contempt, you see, in the contour of the face, the fire of the eye, and the expansion of the forehead, the glory of an ancient and noble lineage. High and glorious is the pedigree of

man, "who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the *Son of God.*" At the beginning, man held joyful communion with his Maker. Fallen from that high estate into guilt and misery, will he ever be restored?

The history of *man* has a past, a present, and a future. We can not read it unmoved, since our own character and destiny are involved in the life of our race. Let us go back to Eden, and see man in his original innocence and glory, his temptation, his fall, his shame, his expulsion, the hereditary consequences of the first disobedience, and all his fruitless attempts at self-recuperation. Next will we visit the garden of Gethsemane, where the Son of God fainted in excess of agony, and, inquiring who he was, and what he did, learn by what methods man has been *redeemed.* Then will we read together of that Paradise of God which is promised to the penitent—its joy, its security, its society, all its elements of blessedness—that we may be taught how man is to be *restored* to more than his original perfection.

These are the topics about which there has been the greatest amount of speculation. Concerning them we have had fable and philosophy, fiction and hypothesis. It is time that we turn to historic facts, and their interpretation in the sure word of inspired Scripture,

which together form a unity of testimony, as the block of marble is one, though veined and clouded with all varieties of color.

Concerning the beginning of our race, the only authentic record we have is in the *Word of God.* There is no other accredited book which pretends to carry the history of man to its very origin. Profane history begins its authentic dates centuries later than the Mosaic account of man's creation. All beyond is conjecture, mythology, and mystery. Reason, unaided by revelation, could only demonstrate this one thing—that man, at some time, must have been created; for man is a finite being, and an eternal succession of finite beings involves a contradiction. A series of finite beings, each beginning his life in time, must have had a Creator infinite and eternal. *How*, *when*, *where*, this succession of human life began, we have no method whatever of ascertaining, save through the revelation which has been given us by that Being from whom human life proceeded. This revelation is explicit, and, if it contains not all which curiosity might desire, the facts which it communicates are precisely those which it is most needful for us to know.

Not only was there a time when man, as yet, had no existence in this world, but, as we believe, man began existence when he was created in Eden. We have no faith whatever in the *pre-existence* of man, in some

other state, prior to this world's creation. We are not altogether uninformed of what has been written in favor of such a theory. The notion was broached in antiquity, and it has been revived in modern times for the avowed purpose of solving certain mysterious problems in the moral government of God, about which speculative minds have carried on a conflict for ages. Concerning this theory of man's pre-existence, two things may be said. The one is, that, admitting it to be true, it furnishes no solution whatever of the difficulties in question pertaining to sin and responsibility, but only removes those difficulties to a remoter stage of being, leaving them there as much in mystery as they now are. Besides which, the theory is unsupported by one particle of proof. The *obvious* teaching of Scripture is against it. The New Testament certainly connects the character and condition of the human race with the history of the first pair, and not with any pre-existence of our own, before we began to live in this world. In expressing this judgment concerning the theory of man's pre-existence, we would not object to any form of hypothesis which does not overstep the modesty of true science; but we can not countenance any interpretation of the Sacred Writings which would bring up an occult and philosophic sense to override and conceal that which is obvious to a simple-minded reader. An insuperable objection to this theory of man's pre-existence,

as that theory has been revived and advocated of late, is, that it makes the Scriptures of little account. It is affirmed that this theory is the only one which can save the glory of God from disastrous "eclipse." It is the only one which can save a thoughtful mind from blank despair. It promises to be a solution and a help, a resting-place and a joy to man, such as alone can give him confidence in his Maker — the only method by which all this can be accomplished. On this supposition, of how much value to me is the Word of God? If *this* does not vindicate sufficiently the glory of God, so that we can have all faith in his wisdom and truth — if it does not meet these essential conditions of my being — how have you depreciated it in my esteem! Any theory, therefore, which claims to be better than the obvious meaning of Scripture — which proposes to honor God, comfort and satisfy man, in some other manner than that revealed in this book — to that degree supplants Scripture, making it worthless, and so is palpably infidel in its tendencies. We have no memory of pre-existence; we have no history of it; no tradition of it; and no proof whatever of it. The history of man begins with his creation on the earth where we now live.

The creation of man is represented as the last and highest act of divine skill. Everything before had been preparatory to this. The earth had emerged from the surging waters. The lights of the firmament had been

kindled. Vegetation had begun its luxuriant growth. Animal life had been created — cleaving the air with wing, moving through the pliant wave, or walking on the solid earth. Science, by her latest observations, authenticates all these written testimonies as to the series and succession of things created — discovering in the great leaves of Nature's book the self-same order of procession which is described in the pages of the inspired volume. When this goodly creation was finished, man was made in the image of God; and, in this act, the Omnipotent is represented as evoking his utmost skill, employing his own plastic hand, and imparting his own life-giving breath.

We receive what is here written of man's creation and first abode as historical verity. We believe that Eden had a definite topography. The rivers which bounded it are called by names. All has the appearance of historical description. It were idle to mention all the fables, traditions, and theories, which have been written in reference to the locality of paradise. There is a moral in the fact that the exact position of the garden of innocence can not be authenticated. Eden exists not now. We have relics of it, but it is no more a reality. It is a faded vision. It *was*, but is not now to be found. History begins, as the sun rises, in the East. Somewhere in that remote land, probably not far from the chain of the Caucasus, between the waters of

the Black sea and the Caspian, near the head-springs of the Euphrates and the Tigris, in a region afterward known as Armenia, was the dwelling-place of the first man, in the original perfection of his nature.

Behold what contrasts met and mingled in the formation of man — the dust of the earth, and the inspiration of the Almighty! Distinct and dissimilar are these several properties, but they are wonderfully combined in the person of man.

The body of man was first fashioned, and this out of the dust of the ground. Its form and organization were complete before it was animated with life. And God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a *living soul*." What is *life?* Where is it seated? How is it diffused? It is a mysterious power which warms and vitalizes that body which, without it, would be as cold and motionless as common clay. We know nothing concerning it save by its effects. We follow it, and it eludes our inspection. The scalpel of the anatomist opens a way through which inquiry may enter; but, no sooner is the inner citadel reached, than the dweller is found to have escaped. Animal life is itself a prodigy — even when we see it vitalizing a little handful of earth, and sending it up, with music in its warbling throat, to the gates of heaven; or making another form of it, invested with scales of gold and silver, to spring from the brook, leaping for joy in the

simple pleasure of existence. But man is something more than vitalized clay. The breath of God imparted to the human form something more than animal life. The inspiration of the Almighty gave him *understanding*. He was made in the likeness of his Maker. He received a rational and intelligent nature. More than instinct, there was given to him a reasonable soul. All that has been written in advocacy of materialism is disproved at once by a reference to this simple record of man's creation. The soul is not the product of matter, nor any accident or modification of matter. It is a distinct existence — distinct in its origin, distinct in its nature. Though united, the body and the soul each preserves its own separate quality. The one is dust, the other is spirit. The one was fashioned by God's fingers, the other came from God's own life. This distinction is recognised throughout the whole of Scripture. What we call death is the dissolution of this fellowship and conjunction between the body and the soul. So saith the Scripture: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." There lies the lifeless form, complete in structure. Not yet

——"Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers"—

and the human body seems for a brief term, now that the soul has parted from it, even as it was when God

first fashioned it, before the soul was united unto it. The philosophic speculations of all ages concerning life and soul, materialism and immaterialism, have not advanced one iota beyond the sublime conciseness of this inspired description of man's creation — this compound of dust and divinity — a body that dies, and a soul that will live for ever. Behold the *first man*, as he stood before his Maker: —

> "Erect in stature,
> With front serene and thoughtful, self-knowing,
> Magnanimous, to correspond with Heaven!"

What can we imagine of such awful beauty as the human face when it first reflected the smile of God? Man's brow is now knit with care, soiled with dust, seamed and scarred with disease; his eye downcast upon the path he treads; and his heart depressed with the humiliations of guilt. So was not man at the first.

That our conception of unity might not be disturbed — that our conviction of the oneness of the human race might be clear and strong — the creation of woman is described, not as a separate existence, but as a part of the very life which is the parent-stock of our species. Vulgar infidelity may scoff and cavil at this narration, and call the Mosaic record of woman's creation a myth and nothing more; but the power which fashioned man out of the dust, and the worlds out of nothing, may readily be believed to have performed what is here written, beyond the reach of a sarcasm. If ever fitness,

design, proportion, and harmony, were subserved, it was here. Woman was not made a distinct, divided, independent, and isolated personality, but she was taken from beneath the arm and nearest the heart of man, to be protected and loved; so the two thus united had but *one life*.

The unity of the human race is not a mere philosophical speculation. Our minds toil after its intuition. We believe that it is taught expressly in the Sacred Scriptures. We hold it to be implied in the very structure of doctrinal Christianity. It was by *one* man's disobedience that the relations of the whole race were changed, even as it was by one man's obedience that the world was redeemed. There was one Adam and one Christ. In asserting this belief we cast no reproach upon scientific theories. We are not, indeed, ignorant of the auspices under which the unity of the human race has been questioned. It was Voltaire who gave chief currency to the notion, for the very purpose of discrediting the Bible. It was ably met and answered by Haller and Cuvier—greater and better physiologists than he. Let scientific research be aided and forwarded in this direction; for our faith is strong that the ultimate testimony of physiology will be in accordance with the Scriptures, in proof of the unity of the human race.

Desirous of knowing what changes have since oc-

curred in our common nature, we would first be informed of its primeval properties.

The *body* of man was perfect in its organization and functions. The mind was not disordered nor enfeebled, as now, by physical infirmities. The appetites and passions which, since the apostacy, often destroy both body and soul, were then conformed to their proper uses, and subject to their prescribed moderation and regularity. Poetry has always delighted, in weaving the traditions concerning the Golden Age, to describe the beauty, and size, and strength of man in that state of innocence. Setting aside all that is purely imaginative, we know that man, in Paradise, was a stranger to disease, deformity, and pain; that the perfect organism of his body made existence a delight, and brought no shadow or depression upon the soul.

The *mind* of man was clear and true. The power of intelligence was a property which made him the image of God. Unlike inert matter, moved by physical forces, unlike irrational animals impelled by blind instinct, man was capable of understanding the will of his Maker. We will not indulge in fanciful conjectures as to the degrees of his knowledge, but, content with what is written of the faculty of knowing, delight ourselves with imagining what man must have been, when that faculty was unperverted by prejudice, unbeclouded by falsehood—so that there was no re-

fraction to the rays of truth entering the mind, which in pure and honest intelligence answered unto the intelligence of God.

Man was endowed with *perfect freedom*. In the well-ordered words of the Westminster Confession, "God endowed the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to do good or evil." Nothing so exalts our idea of the goodness and power of the Almighty as the creation of a being capable of acting, and free to act, upon his own choice and responsibility. Concisely and admirably has Milton described this property of man, in the words of Raphael to Adam in Paradise: —

> "God made thee perfect, not immutable:
> And good he made thee: but to persevere
> He left it in thy power: ordained thy will
> By nature free, not overruled by fate
> Inextricable, or strict necessity.
> Our voluntary service he requires,
> Not our necessitated. Such with him
> Finds no acceptance, nor can find: for how
> Can hearts not free be tried whether they serve
> Willing or no: who will but what they must
> By destiny, and can no other choose?
> Myself and all the angelic host that stand
> In sight of God enthroned, our happy state
> Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds
> On other surety none: freely we serve
> Because we freely love: as in our will
> To love or not, in this we stand or fall."

When we add, that man was originally *holy*, we do not intend that his holiness was created in the same manner as the faculties of his mind and the organs of his body; or that it was involuntary, like the natural instincts and appetences; but simply this, that all his thoughts, affections, and actions, were right: that his obedience was perfect—that there was no conflict between the several parts of his nature—no law in the members warring against the law in the mind, that the voluntary obedience of man was so complete, that he was the very image of his Maker—his holy affections responding unto the holy affections of God. A "golden age" indeed was that when the human conscience spake approvingly, without one impeachment, without one compunction of remorse; man rejoicing in his own conscious innocence, and God pronouncing this his last and greatest work superlatively good.

Such were the original elements of man's character. The circumstances of his *condition* corresponded thereto. The curse is on the earth itself now, in consequence of sin. Thorns and thistles does it bring forth. It is hard for us to conceive what that garden was which God had planted as the perfect abode of his perfect creatures. Every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food was there, flowers and fruits in their endless profusion of form and fragrance. That we may not be thought to be drawing upon fancy for

the sources of pleasure which abounded in Eden, we will mention such only as are described by the pen of inspiration.

The first was *cheerful occupation.* Indolence is the offspring of sin and not the blessing of innocence. Well was it said by Matthew Henry, "if either a high extraction, or a great estate, or a large dominion, or perfect innocence, or a genius for pure contemplation, or a small family, could have given man a writ of ease, Adam had not been set to work." The blessedness of God is not in sleep, but in unwearied and beneficent action; and man, made in his image, was immediately assigned an occupation. "And the Lord put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and keep it." Man's first employment was to till that very earth out of which he sprung, and in the bosom of which he is to find his grave. Work and labor are not synonyms. With the latter we associate difficulty — sometimes hard and depressing drudgery. Man's work at first was pleasant only, restraining and pruning the exuberance of nature's spontaneous growth; sin has changed that easy occupation for the sweat of the face, and the bending of the back.

Next to the pleasant exercise of the body and mind was *sublunary lordship* delegated to man over all the works of God's hand. Not one of the inferior animals was an object of terror or disgust to man or to one another, but their instincts were subjected to innocence

and kindness. No venomous reptile was there to bite —no ravenous beast to devour; the vulture had not yet covered the dove—nor had the lion preyed upon the lamb; the tiger and the leopard kissed the hand of innocence, and came fawning and gentle to the feet of man, their unfeared and fearless lord.

To this was added *society*. It had not been good even for innocence to be solitary. Marriage is a word and an institution which sin has so far associated with low instinct, with ideas of barter, convenience, and advantage, that some effort of the imagination is requisite to conceive of its heavenly original, its paradisaical prototype, which secured to man the exercise of his most joyful sympathies, society so blessed, confidence so complete, that between the two whom God had placed in Eden there was but one heart.

Last of all was *worship of the Creator*, and *God's benediction*. The worship of God by sinless man!—not with mediatory rites and sacrifices, not by smoking altars and bleeding beasts, not by typical sacraments and priestly intercessions; but by direct, immediate, personal, sensible communion. With no shame on his cheek, no fear in his soul, man stood erect before his Maker in all the confidence and joy of perfect innocence. Then was it that God abode with man as with his child, smiling upon him morning, noon, and night, and walking with him amid the bowers of Eden. Not

now did he seem to man as afterward, when he descended on Sinai, making darkness his pavilion and flaming fire his chariot. Not now did he reveal himself as afterward to the vision of inspired prophecy, when he rode upon the wings of the wind, or made the mountains to smoke at his touch, and the pillars of the temple to tremble at the approach of his glorious majesty. There were no images of terror to represent the coming of the Almighty—no thundering, no lightning, no earthquake, no voice of trumpet—nor was there one emotion of fear in the soul of man. How was this communion accomplished? Did God reveal himself in a visible form?

We will not trespass beyond what is written. But it were strange indeed if God has manifested himself in a human form to man in his apostacy—if he has promised that this manifestation should be repeated, at the last, when every eye shall see him—and man in his original blessedness and glory had no sensible communion with his Maker. Second causes did not then interpose their opaque influences to prevent the light of God's countenance from shining full upon the soul. He was seen to be near; he was felt to be near; and truly heaven and earth were blended together in the morning of the world's history. God blessed our innocent progenitors, and the first sabbath of the world shone on their consummate felicity. If angelic choirs chanted

praises on the plains of Bethlehem, when man's Redeemer was born, wonder not that the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, over the unsullied blessedness of Eden.

By comprehending what was peculiar in man's character and condition at first, we shall the better understand what changes have occurred in our common nature—what lineaments of the divine likeness still remain—what have been effaced—where and how restorative help is to be applied.

In this we must all be agreed. This is not Eden. We know not where we shall find it, voyaging and travelling around the world in search of it. We are not holy and happy as was man at the first. A great change has come over the race, and we must account for it. Neither are we abandoned to useless and hopeless regrets, sighing only for the paradise that is lost—

> "Yearning for its meadow-sweet breath,
> Untainted by care, and crime, and death"—

for, in our religion, memory and hope are so blended together, that conscious guilt may smile with expectation of another paradise of God, which is far better than the first; and to that, weary, ashamed, afraid, sorrowing, dying, does the gospel of Christ direct and help us. May the happy effect of all these our meditations upon man's original, his fall, his redemption, his restoration, his first and second probation, be to incite us

to make sure of that celestial paradise which Christian faith anticipates, with its complete perfection, its eternal security, its trees of knowledge, and its trees of life!

II.

MAN'S FIRST PROBATION.

As to the interpretation of that portion of Scripture which narrates the original probation and fall of man, different methods have been advocated. It would be difficult to select any other part of the sacred volume about which there has been the same amount of curious speculation. The reader will easily perceive how many topics are suggested by the narrative, which would be likely to divert minds of a certain order from the principal subject of the history—such as curious disquisitions about the tree of knowledge and the tree of life, the mode of Satanic approach, the origin of evil, and many other matters of similar import. Many have given an allegorical interpretation to the whole passage, for the purpose of avoiding what has seemed to them a difficulty arising from the extreme simplicity of the narrative as it now stands. Others interpret it as partly allegorical and partly historical. Others, still, inter

pret it as a myth, a didactic fable, a truth invested in a poetic form — some asserting that the account of man's first trial was represented in a pictorial method, so that the language of Moses is here borrowed from hieroglyphic figures, thus combining together the historical and the mythical. This reference to these several methods of interpreting the passage is made for the distinct purpose of saying that the plan now proposed will not make it necessary to enter upon the discussion of any one of these incidental matters. Even those who regard the whole narrative of Moses concerning man's abode in Eden as mythological, agree in this, that the myth has a moral; though an allegory is the form in which truth is conveyed, yet truth still is thus conveyed. It is that truth, that one fact, whether it be communicated in hieroglyphical, allegorical, or didactic language, with which we are now to be occupied. Bearing this in mind, we shall dispense with all that is simply curious and speculative, and occupy ourselves with the one great fact which is here revealed, whatever mode of interpreting the form of revelation may be adopted. Those who give the most literal interpretation to every item of the narrative, and those who incline to the tropical and mythical, all agree that the object of the sacred writer was to describe the *first probation of human nature*. And this is the topic now before us — a topic altogether practical to ourselves,

since the first and second forms of human probation differ essentially.

The terms of man's original probation are briefly defined. *Simple obedience* to the will of God describes the first moral trial of human nature. A special act of obedience was presented, and the conditions of probation were simply these: *obey*, and retain all the pleasures and rewards of innocence; *disobey*, and there shall follow the pangs of remorse, and the displeasure of God. Obey, and live; disobey, and die. Such is the definition of man's original probation. He was placed "under law"—if we may use a word which to us is associated with severity, and compulsion, and awe, as descriptive of that trial of innocence, with which nothing repulsive was connected. The thing to be observed is, that obedience—obedience alone, nothing but obedience—describes the original probation of man. There is no mixture of mercy, of forgiveness, in the terms of it. Mercy is a gratuity offered to guilt. Nothing of this was proposed to original innocence, for it was not needed while innocence was retained. It matters not at all whether the interdicted act be in itself great or small, vast or trivial—it was a *test* of obedience; and that was the moral trial to which the nature of man was first subjected.

Observe the *favorable auspices* of this original pro-

bation. There was no propensity in man's nature to evil. There was no derangement in his constitution inclining him to sin. Body and soul were absolutely perfect in their organization. There was no proclivity, no bias, in the wrong direction. Man was the very likeness of his Maker, with no more disposition or inclination to evil than in the holy nature of God.

The *terms* of the probation were definitely *understood.* This is essential to all fairness and equity when the principle of obedience is to be tested. Acts which proceed from ignorance or accident are not to be confounded with the intelligent and purposed infraction of positive injunctions. When serpent subtlety suggested the first temptation to the mind of Eve, she quickly repelled it, on the ground that the act to which she was solicited was forbidden by the express interdict of the Creator; thus proving that the first condition of legal probation was complied with, in that the test of obedience was well and perfectly understood.

The *circumstances* of the probation were in all other respects eminently *auspicious.* The liberty allowed was the very largest. There was no pressure of want to necessitate transgression. All the delights of Eden were at the command of its innocent tenants. The amplest range of enjoyment was afforded; all created things were at their disposal, save that one, which it was their pleasure to avoid, because obedience to their

Maker was a delight. Infidelity may scoff at the trivial nature of the act interdicted; but the obvious reply is, that acts are not to be measured by their own littleness or largeness, or the brevity of the time in which they are performed, but by their *relations*—the smallest serving as a test as well as the largest.

With the mention of these several circumstances, we can not conceive how human nature could have been tested, as to the principle of obedience, on conditions more hopeful, more auspicious, more equitable, than it actually was in Eden. The imagination has often been indulged, and the wish expressed, that we, each for himself, might have been put on probation, in reference to simple obedience to divine statutes, with no disadvantage of evil example, or a vitiated nature, or misleading influences, or unfavorable conditions, against us. It is well to bear in mind that the first and only probation of human nature, on terms of simple, unmixed obedience to law, was conducted under circumstances which left absolutely nothing more auspicious, more desirable, to be conceived of.

How long man continued in that state of innocence, proving and enjoying his obedience, we are not informed. There is a meaning in the fact that the narrative of man's first probation is so brief. All which relates to it is condensed into one short chapter. The Bible is constructed for the advantage of humanity in

its *second* probation, and consequently nothing more is revealed concerning the first than barely suffices to acquaint us with its nature and issue — thus serving as an introduction to that which ensues, upon which we are now passing our earthly existence.

Temptation is now presented to the occupants of Eden. Temptation is not sin, but it seems to be implied in the very nature of man's probation. Were we to derive all our knowledge concerning the temptation of man in Eden from the third chapter of Genesis, we should suspect no other agency as connected with it than impressions made on the mind of innocence by the serpent, remarkable for beauty, adroitness, and subtlety — feeding, perhaps, himself on the very tree which was interdicted to man. But we are not left in this imperfect acquaintance with facts. Later disclosures of inspiration make it certain that another order of beings was concerned in instigating man to evil. Here have we the first allusion which, like a hinge or link, connects the history of our race with events which occurred before man was made — a connection which subsists now, and is to continue, in one form or another, when this world is consumed — so binding for ever, past, present, and future events of Providence, into one vast and endless system, ever revolving and unfolding. Sin existed in the universe before it blighted Eden. Some of the angels kept not their first estate; and rev-

elation positively instructs us that man's apostacy, and man's redemption, and man's final destiny, have direct relations to the history of those who fell from heaven before man was fashioned out of the dust. It is frequently said that our notions on this subject are drawn from the "Paradise Lost" of Milton, rather than from the Word of God. But is not that sublime epic, as to the great facts of its construction, founded on the historical incidents of the inspired Scriptures? We claim that it is. We are not jealous, as believers in inspiration, of the influence upon our imagination of that book which, in the great outlines of its mechanism, is accordant with revelation. The blindness of Milton seems to have been sent for the world's blessing—inward illumination increasing as sensible vision was darkened: so that, while the great epics of the Greek and Latin languages relate only to the overthrow or founding of states, the epic of the English language, constructed out of the materials furnished by divine revelation, informs and exalts the imagination of all who read our native tongue to a greater familiarity with those august events of the spiritual world which are disclosed by our religion, and inseparably allied to our immortality.

After all which has been written by metaphysical philosophy about the *origin of sin*, we take the subject just where it was found by those who first began to think and speculate concerning it. Very much has

been written on the subject, we know, which is visionary, which is irrational—explanations which explain nothing—solutions of problems which are not solved at all; but we are not aware that all the philosophic discussions of the world together ever advanced beyond the condensed and inimitable formula of the apostle James: "God can not be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin originated in no compulsion, no inducement, on the part of God. It is not an accident, or effect of matter. It had its origin in the free-will of man. It was man's free-will which was on trial. Involuntary suggestion, the thought, the imagination of the act interdicted, was not sin; but the entertainment of that imagination, the cherishing of that desire, the accomplishing of that thought—this is sin. Such is the sequency in this actual history. She *looked*—she saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; desire was enkindled, was cherished: and this, when it conceived, brought forth sin; and sin, when completed in act, brought forth death. All the metaphysics of centuries, whole libraries of philosophic discussion, concerning the origin and nature of sin, condensed together, add nothing to this concise statement of historic events.

The fact with which we are chiefly concerned is, that man's first probation *terminated disastrously*. That tree which, because of the divine interdict, had been avoided—which had been the test of obedience—through the subtleties of diabolic solicitation, was approached, and the fruit thereof was eaten. The tempter was believed more than God. The desire of self-control, distrust and independence of the Creator, and palpable infringement of his well-known will, were the ripened form and fruit of sin. The bright and happy auspices of the first probation availed nothing; and, notwithstanding circumstances most propitious in aid of obedience, sin entered the world, with all ist entailment of wo!

Behold the changes which were produced by transgression!

The first was *shame*. A new emotion was this to man. He who had rejoiced in the perfect consciousness of innocence, before his Maker, was now bereaved of that happy sense, and depressed with mortification. There was no blush in Eden, as there was none in heaven, till sin entered it. That crimson signal of guilt, or offended modesty, betrays the knowledge between good and evil which was first born on earth when transgression invaded Eden. No reproof, no upbraiding, no sentence, as yet had been uttered by their Maker; but the guilty pair had lost, what they never could

regain, ignorance of evil, consciousness of innocence, and they were *ashamed*. Shame is the first-born progeny of sin.

The next was *fear of God*. That fear had been unknown and unimagined before. The greatest joy of innocence was to have communion with the Creator, conscious of meriting, certain of receiving, his benediction. With what exuberant delight the heart of holy man bounded to meet the Being from whom his own being had proceeded. The voice of God was now heard — "Adam, where art thou?" — but there was no gladness in the heart of man to meet him: and the conscience-smitten culprits, cowering with terror, hid themselves beneath the trees of the garden. Yet not with terror only. Let it not escape us how true to nature, how true to all we have ourselves observed and experienced, is the record here given of the effects produced by primeval transgression. We are naturally repelled from the society of those we have wronged. An innocent child, conscious of having regarded every parental injunction, will enjoy no society so much as of those very parents in whose sunny approbation it loves to bask. Let the case be reversed, and a parent's will be disregarded, and that child will feel itself repelled from the presence of those whose favor it has consciously forfeited. Repulsion from God was the necessary effect of guilt and shame.

Man sought to conceal himself from his Maker. An evil conscience invariably begets dislike and fear of God.

The next effect of disobedience was *mutual recrimination* between the guilty parties. Before, they were as one with themselves, as they were one with God. But now they are at variance. The harsh word, the cruel taunt, the bitter recrimination, are passed between the offending pair. Here, again, observe how truthful to nature is this narrative. It is hard for the guilty honestly to acknowledge sin. Shame deters from manly and ingenuous confession, and begets subterfuges, evasions, excuses, prevarications, without number, and without end. The charge of guilt was thrown from one to the other—by Adam upon Eve, by Eve upon the tempter—and throughout it all there was that mean and pitiable effort which conscious guilt always engenders, to evade the light of truth, and ward off the unequivocal admission of demerit.

Now comes the sentence of retribution—the curse of the Almighty—pealing in thunders on the ear of affrighted nature. It was not malice which uttered the direful words, for God was at the beginning, is now, and ever shall be *Love*. Nevertheless, it was God himself who pronounced a curse upon the tempter, a curse upon the woman, a curse upon man, a curse upon the earth, for their sakes.

Pain, and *sorrow*, now began: and pain and sorrow

were to be continued. Transgression is the head-spring of sorrow.

Occupation was a part of man's enjoyment in innocence. Now easy and pleasant *work* is exchanged for hard and toilsome *labor*. Now that man has himself opened a leak in the ship, he is put under the stern necessity of sweat, and strife, to drive out the invading water or be drowned. We shall see, in the proper time and place, how the remedy is made appropriate to the evil: not by removing the necessity of exertion: but by mitigating and modifying the curse to such a degree that a compensatory good is deduced from the necessary evil. Work in innocence was regulated and limited by pleasure; but labor after defection, is imposed by necessity, and is hard, exacting, and onerous.

Next comes the curse of *death*. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The most distinct punishment of transgression was that man *must die*. Out of the ground was he taken, and unto the ground must he return. Man saw death before he tasted it himself. What emotions must have agitated his soul when, for the first time he saw the death of an animal, which, but for his guilt, would have fawned and sported before him; its touching bleat, its quivering limbs, its convulsive palpitation, its stiffness, its coldness, its death! So man himself should die. *Sin* entered the world, and *death* by sin. That gloomy shape, which shadows the

earth to-day, strode into Eden, and brandished his menacing dart at the guilty.

Last of all came *expulsion from Eden.* That tree of life from which they had eaten, and might have eaten always but for transgression, was not to be their food now that they had lost their innocence. They were driven out of the garden—its blessedness was forfeited for ever. Eden was lost: nor could man regain and re-enter it. This is the substance of the whole narrative. The first probation of human nature ended in shame, suffering, recrimination, remorse, and death. The world has had one Eden—and only one. Man has never discovered and reclaimed it since our progenitors lost it. Fable has told us of the garden of the Hesperides, of Elysian fields, but who has ever found an Eden? We have read of royal magnificence, of sumptuous palaces, of gardens wrought by art, watered by fountains, and replenished by affluence, but we have never read of human abodes in which there existed the innocence, the love, the fearlessness, the joy, of original paradise. We have never read of the royal residence into which death might not intrude; nor the bosom into which sorrow never could enter.

Where shall we betake ourselves now to find an Eden? Should we climb the steep of Ararat, would we find it there? Should we voyage to those isles of Greece about which the memories of history throw

their soft and radiant light, could we find it there? Does it sleep undiscovered in the bosom of one of those islands in the Pacific seas which are clad with perpetual verdure? Barbarism is there. The fairest portion, of the world—the cradle of the human race—the very plains and valleys where the fathers of our race once lived—are now in the possession of half-civilized and degenerate tribes; nor is there one sheltered nook in this vast world, explore as we will, which corresponds to that abode, where man walked and worshipped in his innocence. Eden is something past, lost, and gone from the earth. It is an historic tradition—a form of probation which is finished for ever. The *consequences* of that original trial of human nature still remain; but the same form of probation, on the same terms, and under the same auspices, has never been repeated, and if we read the Scriptures aright, will never be repeated on the earth.

What are the consequences of that first disobedience? Were any entailed upon the posterity of the first pair? Did all the disastrous effects of transgression terminate on the two who committed the first sin, or did they travel over to involve, in any manner, the human race?

Without anticipating the answer to these inquiries, our attention is arrested by one remarkable fact. The history of our world did not terminate abruptly and

immediately after sin had invaded and blighted it. God did not forsake the race that had forsaken him. God was not alienated from man when man was alienated from him. The life of humanity was not ended, at once and for ever, by the disastrous issue of its first probation. From all which is told us in revelation, we infer that, when the fallen angels sinned, retribution followed immediately upon transgression. They "who kept not their first estate, left their own habitation, and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." For them was no reprieve, no redemption, no gospel of forgiveness. Mark the difference. When man sinned, though retribution of one kind followed, yet man was spared. The curtain did not drop before this stage of being, nor the life of man go out in darkness. Mercy was mingled with the displeasure of justice.

Speaking after the manner of men, we say that man's first probation was a failure, a disappointment, and a wreck. But the waves of oblivion did not roll over the world, nor was a new creation evoked to supply its place; but the world continued, the sun shone, the stars kept on in their courses, time waited, and man was placed on a new and different probation. That second probation forms the great body of human history. The first was a mere prelude to the second. This explains why it is that the narrative of the first is so

brief and condensed. It is not pertinent or practical to ourselves at all. We are not deciding our destiny on the same probationary terms which were prescribed to man at the beginning. Our immortal blessedness is not pivoted on the contingency of sinless obedience and unsullied innocence. Mercy presides over the second and main probation of our race; and our destiny turns on our relations and dispositions to the means of redemption. A glimpse of coming hope and relief breaks through the gloom of the curse itself: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Promise is mingled with the very utterance of displeasure; nor does the cloud which gathered its blackness, and uttered its thunders over the heads of the guilty, discharge its contents, before the bow of hope is painted on its gloom, to gladden their tearful eyes and desponding heart; nor have they stepped outside the gates of Eden, before the second probation of human nature begins, under the auspices of restorative help.

Sometimes we wonder why the closing days of the first man's life are not more minutely described. His history was prolonged through well-nigh a thousand years. What was the state of the world—into what forms and degrees of development human nature unfolded itself, before Adam died—we are well informed. But the personal character, the emotions, the hopes, the sorrows, the dying scene, of the first man,

are not recorded. His second son leads the column of the faithful; and the New Testament expressly mentions the blood which Abel shed in sacrifice as the religious confidence he expressed in the coming of One who was to redeem and restore the world.

Not one of the human race—such is the record of the Word of God—not one of all its countless myriads—neither Adam nor one of that vast family of his—never yet gathered together on earth, and never but once to be gathered together, at the tribunal of the Son of man—not one of the whole will ever enter the kingdom of heaven on the terms of the first probation, because of sinless obedience—because of the deserts of an unstained and unfallen glory. There is not one who would presume to enter into judgment with God on such conditions. Who would invite the scrutiny of Omniscience, and challenge the verdict of the Almighty on the claim of being holy as our Maker? Fear would blanch the cheek, beyond all the pallor of death, at the thought of terminating our earthly trial and going into the presence of God with such a pretence!

We need not wait, therefore, till we draw out, in scholastic order, the statement of redemption, before announcing what is the only hope and safety of man. We live under the auspices of mercy, and our salvation is in the remission of sins. We are not in Adam, but in Christ. How much better, how much safer, how

much more for our blessedness this is, will appear in the proper place, when we treat of those wonders of divine love by which the sad issues of the first probation were overruled and superseded by the compensatory provisions of the second. Enough to know, the Scriptures record it, the ministry herald it, the skies reflect it, the world has heard it, sabbaths repeat it, time re-echoes it, the Spirit and the Bride proclaim it; and, ere the mystery of Providence shall close, it shall roll around the earth from pole to pole—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Behold already the terms of our earthly probation! Let us flee, seasonably and joyfully, for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel.

III.

HUMAN NATURE SINCE THE APOSTACY.

WHATEVER may have been thought of the preceding parts of our general subject, the topic upon which we now enter can never be regarded as abstract and impertinent. It may have seemed somewhat like a piece of ancient history, when we read of Eden, its innocence, its blessedness, its temptation, its blight, and its loss. It may have appeared very much like the study of a subject not only distant in point of time, but foreign and extraneous from ourselves in point of fact, when we were describing the fortunes of the first human pair. But the topic now before us, and next in order, comes home to every man's own bosom. It crowds itself, uncalled and irrepressible, upon our thoughts, on occasions of the profoundest interest; whenever a child is born into the world, and whenever a child dies out of it—when life begins, and life ends; it is vital to all sys-

tems of education, to all questions of philanthropy, of reform, of general civilization, to all the prospects of humanity on the earth, and to all our personal hopes for futurity. All are profoundly interested in the question whether the consequences of the apostacy terminated on the two individuals who fell from their loyalty, or whether they involved their immediate and remote progeny. Were those who were born of our first parents, and those again who were born of them, generation after generation, as innocent and as perfect as was man when first created, or were they in some manner deteriorated, sharing in the evils consequent upon transgression? Human nature—the general character of the human race—has it been modified unhappily by the acts narrated as occurring at the very beginning? If so, in what manner, and to what degree?

What is the truthful theory concerning human nature?

No intelligent reader, only moderately informed concerning the history of opinions, needs to be reminded that we have fallen upon a topic about which there has been the greatest amount of discussion and controversy. It is about this very point that there has been waged the "conflict of ages." We have no intention of rewriting its history. We do not even purpose to give a *resumé* of the various opinions which have been advo-

cated by different schools of theology on this subject. Indeed, it shall be my object, for the present, to avoid it. And I would ask the reader, by a special effort, to put out of mind all which he has ever heard or read of Augustine and Pelagius, of federal headship, of imputation, and such like scholastic and theological technicalities. For such terms and distinctions there is a time and a place. We do not slur or slight them altogether because we prefer, in this connection, to restrict ourselves entirely to other testimonies.

The first-born of men, what was the character which he developed? He proved a murderer, and slew his own brother. A fugitive and a vagabond was he upon the earth. A mark was placed upon him, not as a brand of infamy, but as a sign of exemption and clemency, that he should not be killed. That impunity, what effect had it upon the multiplied families of men? It encouraged and augmented crime; for Lamech, when he had slain a man, counted on impunity himself, because of the spared life of Cain. Follow the stream of history—how does human nature develop itself? You say that sin being in the earth, evil example and evil influences of all kinds wrought mischief on the character of all who were born in the world, so that their nature unfolded itself infelicitously. Precisely so—the very fact which arrests attention. W

are not *explaining* facts, but *stating* facts. And the fact before us now is, that the character of the human race was constantly degenerating, fast as the race was multiplied. We read of men relatively good; but their number was small. The great current of human life was black and turbid. Before the death of the first man, wickedness was so rife and rampant, that God, speaking in the language of men, repented that he had made man at all. Sixteen centuries revolved, and a flood swept away the world's population; but it washed not out the many memories and traditions of abounding iniquity. The one family chosen of God to outride the deluge, and perpetuate the race, were they like man before the apostacy, and did they reinstate a new and higher form of humanity? We may not even name the crimes which have stained that household with guilt. We follow their varied fortunes. We see great continents divided among their posterity. But we do not see the innocence, the harmony, the worship, the joy, of unblighted Eden. Wars, woes, unnumbered and unmitigated, fill the world.

At length, a new and more perfect revelation of law was given by God—not in the form of tradition, but written on tables of stone—a law by which the holiness of God should be illustrated, and the guilt of man made manifest. Simple in its terms, comprehensive in its nature, the law required supreme love to God, and for

our fellow-men a love equal to love for ourselves. Henceforth that law becomes the criterion of human conduct and character. What, now, is your judgment concerning the development of human nature? Forgetting, for the time being, all theological theories, is it your opinion that the character of the human race has unfolded itself in a general correspondency with this rule and requirement? Can the facts of history be compressed into such a testimony? There can be but one verdict upon that inquest. Love has not been the regnant power of human life. It is not now. Even in this late period of time, when the Christian faith has introduced its help and promise, the business of the world, the governments of the world, the intercourse of men, the conduct of men, are not in accordance with that comprehensive legislation which requires supreme love to God, and joyful love between man and man. There is a defect in human character. There is a blight of some sort upon the human race. The history of our world is the history of a world cursed and darkened by sin. Death passes upon all men, because all have sinned, and Death is in the world. Since the door was opened for his ingress by the hand of Cain, never has he been driven out. He has been ravaging and destroying ever since. He is abroad now; and the marks of his desolation are all around us.

Historically, this brief description of the human race

is related to the disastrous issue of the first probation. It follows it in point of time and fact. That the one is actually connected with the other is distinctly affirmed in the Word of God. The sin which was first committed is, in some manner, related to the sins which follow. It was not merely prior and precedent in the order of occurrence, it was also, after some method, causative in its nature. Is it asked what is the nature of that connection — precisely what was the influence imparted to our natural constitution by the original transgression of our progenitor?

In reply to this question, any amount of theory might be furnished. One "school" attempts to explain it after this manner, and another after that. Some have written about a mysterious unity with Adam before we were born, so that his act was our act before we had an existence; others that his sin was imputed to us, because he was our natural head and representative, though we were not responsible for his appointment to that federal relation; and others, that, by a divine judicial constitution, we are held liable to punishment for it, without any act of our own; and others still, denying the idea of imputation of another's act, yet holding that our natures are depraved anterior to choice and action; others, believing that all sin is voluntary, ascribe the fact that men sin to an exercise of divine efficiency; and yet others, that our nature has been so changed —

though the change is not sinful itself—that it invariably leads to sin when moral agency commences. In addition to all which, the reader might be referred to learned treatises on nature, on constitution, on hereditary qualities, and such like topics; but our preference and purpose just now are to dispose of the question in a much shorter method. When asked to explain, to the utmost satisfaction of the intellect, the *mode* in which human nature—our nature—the nature of our race—has been involved and modified by the first sin, we frankly reply with a confession of ignorance, we *do not know*. The fact of some connection is made certain by the developments of human history, and the affirmations of inspired Scripture. You may not account for the imperfections of human character by the mere force of evil example and infelicitous circumstances. Change these circumstances, and human nature is not itself changed. The children of the best parents in the world are not always as good as those from whom they derive their being. The best examples do not always reduplicate themselves in those who behold them. The fact of some blight, some proclivity, in our common nature, which inclines the whole race in the wrong direction, can not be questioned by those who form their opinions on the observation of facts and the testimony of Scripture, rather than from abstract theories.

Is it affirmed that such a connection with a remote

event in human history can not be justified in equity and honor, we have only to say that this great matter of social relations and liabilities is not at all peculiar to the Scriptures. If the Bible were not in existence, we should see the same fact every day. The acts of an intemperate parent involve the character and destiny of his whole family for a lifetime. The analogy is not used to prove that the hereditary thirst, or poverty, or misery, which are so often entailed upon the children of the inebriate, are the exact counterpart and identity of the mysterious entailment which connects our native character and condition with the act which first brought death into the world, but simply in the way of silencing objections, by proving that no more argument can lie against the record of Scripture than against the natural constitution of the world. It is an objection which concerns the Deist as well as the Christian believer. We may not explain the nature of the transmitted influence which connects our sin with the sin of Adam. It would be of little use to speculate where we can not know. We sin, and we are accountable for our own sins. To deny the fact that we sin, that all men sin, that all the human race are deficient in the judgment of the law which requires supreme love to God and disinterested love for our fellows, is to forswear the testimony of facts, the whole drift of history, and the positive affirmations of the inspired Word.

In what respects, then, has human nature changed from what it once was? Give us the horoscope of man, as he now is, and we shall comprehend the effects which have been wrought on his nature. Two opinions have prevailed among theological writers concerning human nature since the apostacy. According to one, man is greatly to be admired and revered; according to the other, he is most abject and depraved. Paradoxical as it may seem, both are true, since man is to be estimated on the double scale of being and character.

Man still possesses a *reasonable soul.* Transgression did not despoil him of intelligence, and transmute him into an idiot or a brute. The premises on which Bossuet has built his plausible and poetic theory concerning the transmission of physical effects by means of sacramental processes, are certainly fallacious. All the elements of accountability have survived the fall. Indirect influences, beyond all doubt, sin has brought on the intellectual constitution of man. The human mind is dormant and beclouded, but its original properties are not destroyed. The faculty of intelligence exists, though it is veiled in ignorance—as the eye may be closed, though it be not blinded. Lamentable are the effects of sin on the intellect, in creating prejudices, superstitions, and falsehoods; but the perversion of faculties implies their existence. The disorder of the understanding is not equivalent to its destruction. Rea-

son, that greater light, shines, though it be through a haze; and God addresses it in the truths and motives of his Word. Here it is that we agree with those who admire and revere the nature of man. This thinking and reasonable soul proclaims him to be the offspring of God. In the humblest condition, we recognise this spark of divinity. It outweighs gold and gems. All forms of mere matter, in their vastness or beauty, are valueless in contrast with this spiritual intelligence of man. He may be borne down to the very dust and mire, clothed in rags, pinched with want; but he has a soul capable of cultivation, subject to growth, and destined to immortality. It is of more worth than the whole material world. We dare not think lightly of man's being. We are awed when we survey its great and growing properties. However mean the clay with which it is associated, some lineaments of the divine likeness still remain. In exile, in shame, in prison, in wo, man may be, but the long chain of his pedigree connects him still with God himself. Inspired Scripture authorizes us to pronounce man as the image of God, even since his apostacy.

Besides these faculties of understanding and reason, man possesses others which heighten our conceptions of his greatness. He has powers of imagining, of inventing, of executing, which invest him with the dignity of a secondary creatorship. He has tastes by which he

admires what is beautiful in nature, skilful in art, generous in feeling, and noble in conduct. Affections has he which bind him to kindred, to home, to country. Susceptibilities to gratitude, to honor, has he, and these are often greatly developed by culture. Fairness of judgment would require, in making an analysis of human nature as it now is, that we should bear in mind how much it has already been modified and improved by the direct or indirect effect of the Christian religion, now for so long a time leavening the heart of the race. It were hardly ingenuous, when pronouncing upon the qualities of human nature, to take into account the restorative effects of Christianity, and use these as an argument to prove that humanity was uninjured and in need of no help and medication. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to over-estimate those varied and immortal faculties which, even in his degeneracy, secure to man a grade, on the scale of being, little lower than the angels.

It is true, moreover, that man still possesses that freedom of will with which he was originally created. By free agency is meant precisely what the words import, without the least reserve or equivocation — capacity of choice commensurate with requisition. They are not words attached to religious creeds, to amuse the ear, and to keep off odium from a system of fatalism. When man was first created, and placed on pro-

bation, God dealt with him as a responsible being. So deals he with us. Brutes are impelled by blind instinct: the vis inertia of matter is overcome by physical force; but man is addressed by methods of persuasion suited to his nature. Moral government can not outlast the extinction of those qualities which constitute accountability. Our personal consciousness testifies to this continued existence of responsible freedom. Remorse is the painful admission of having done wrong against the conscious power and obligation to do what is right. The fact that sin is universal, in the history of our race, does not modify the nature of sin, making it less the free act of a responsible subject of law. The fact that men sin inflexibly and desperately does not disprove their moral freedom; the action of the mind in such cases, being as really voluntary as any act of choice whatever, differing from ordinary volition only in this, that it includes and absorbs a greater energy of mind, and comprehends a greater amount and intensity of criminal purpose that any other action whatever.

Dimmed and blighted by the consequences of sin, as earthen vessels are corroded by the vapor of the acids which they contain, the original faculties of our nature are not destroyed. United to a life which is endless—brought into play in connection with immortality—they make man a being still, little short of divine, in whose presence we are awed—and the moment we

suffer ourselves to think lightly or meanly of man's capacities we lose the last hope of his restoration. The highest proof of man's greatness and worth, is in what God has done for his recovery. The Scriptures exalt man's *being* beyond all which man himself ever conceived; and this always in connection with his moral apostacy.

Were the expression adopted—"human nature is sinful"—an explanation of the terms would be demanded which would lead us from historic fact into the region of metaphysical inquiry. The use of inspired language is preferred: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Scriptural assertion and palpable fact are here agreed. Man has intelligence, capacity, conscience, and freedom; but he has *not* obedience. By what test is obedience to be judged? *The revealed law of God.* Another test was prescribed to the first man, even that he should abstain from an interdicted object. The criterion of human character now is this epitome of divine legislation: "THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, WITH ALL THY SOUL, WITH ALL THY STRENGTH, WITH ALL THY MIND, AND THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF." Tried by *this* rule—and not another—the character of man is defective. Man does not love his Maker with all his heart, nor his neighbor as himself. The collective word denotes the human race,

without an individual exception. There is none who has fulfilled that law — without a defect or infringement — *no not one*. In moral depravity there are degrees. There are providential restraints upon its development; especially now that the Christian redemption has wrought so much. It is a libel on humanity and the perversion of a truth, to affirm that men are as utterly bad as they might be; for besides restraints, social and providential, there are laws, many of which man has himself enacted, the shadows of a greater statute, to which he may be conformed in the practice of all which is generous, honest, and humane; but the testimony of history and Scripture is, that by that divine law which demands the supreme love of the soul to God, the character of the human race is defective. Noble specimens there have been of humanity, especially as redeemed and helped by Christianity; but where and when has there been one, out of all the race, who, in an honest judgment, has obeyed the perfect law of his Maker, without the deflection of a thought or the defect of a moment?

Change man's *circumstances* as you will — give him a Christian parentage — place before him a goodly example — here is something which may be affirmed of the whole species; they do not fulfil the law which demands perfect and supreme love to God and man. The first probation of human nature, on principles of

obedience, terminated disastrously; and tried on the same terms, our common nature has been found defective and depraved ever since.

The circumstances of man's condition correspond somewhat to his character. All sin is not to be ascribed to a vitiated bodily constitution; but the human body is subject to strong and ill-regulated appetences —to pain, disease, and death. Fast as the redemptive help is applied to the world, man's physical condition improves; but it were nothing but delusion to affirm that his condition now is what it would have been if sin had not shadowed the earth. It was not misanthropy, but inspired truth, which affirmed that man was born to trouble as sparks fly upward. Innumerable compensations, mitigations, and mercies, remain, but every man who is born into this world comes in contact with evils which do not belong to a state of sinless innocence. Sufferings and sorrows, not to speak of wrongs, oppressions, and wars, remind us that we live in a world on which rests the curse of sin, and which is filled with the penalties of transgression.

All this, instead of lessening, augments our interest in man. It has frequently been alleged that this representation of human nature tends only to its depression and contempt. Quite the reverse of this is the truth. If nothing else could give importance to man, it would be the fact that he has sinned. We need not

compute his faculties, nor trace his genealogy, nor measure his capacity to learn man's real greatness: sin forbids his obscurity, and attracts toward him a new and higher regard. Let one commit a crime in the community, which is against that community's peace and security, and forthwith he emerges into conspicuity. His very name may have been unknown before; his life may have been passed in the deepest recesses of obscurity, but now the eyes of a whole country are turned upon him; magistracy, however exalted, does not deem itself debased by being busy in his apprehension; the officers of justice are on his track; the land and the sea are traversed for his discovery; and it is *crime*, and nothing but *crime*, which has concentrated on that unknown and obscure man the notice and purposes of an outraged people. It is because the honor of law, the security of society, are involved in such a deed, that crime itself lifts one up out of the very depths of contempt to answer at the bar of offended justice. If man's original nature had not been enough to challenge the regard he craves; if the skill of God's right hand and the inspiration of the Almighty combining in his being were not sufficient to exalt him high in the affairs of the universe, his apostacy surely would do it. The honor of the divine majesty, the stability of God's throne, the loyalty of other orders of existence, all are related to man as a sinner. Say not

that man is too insignificant a being to warrant all the regard and costliness of redemption, all the high actions which seem to centre upon him, *sin* has given him a strange importance; nor do we deem it derogatory to the honor of the Most High, while other worlds may be wheeling on in their orbits of joyous innocence, that his chief notice should be directed to this world blighted by sin, even as the shepherd leaveth the ninety and nine which went not astray, and went forth to seek and to save the one which was lost. Aside from the fact that the compassions of God are evoked by the necessities of a race known to be in revolt, revolt itself is an incident which all the perfections of God are pledged to notice; so that if it be true—and who can say whether it be so?—that this world which we inhabit is the only one, out of the vast universe, which is disloyal and sinful, we have herein discovered a reason why the gaze of angels and the thoughts of God are directed so intently upon it.

It is hard to discuss topics like that now before us as if they were independent and insulated facts. We know that the apostacy of man is associated with restorative help. The tree may divest itself of the fibres which make up its own substance, the rock may throw off from itself the accretions of ages, but the soul, educated under the auspices of the Christian faith, can not divest itself of that knowledge of Christ and salva

tion, which has grown and strengthened with its own being. If we could conceive of a world darkened and burdened by sin, as is our own—of such a fact by itself, in its own uncheered and unmitigated gloom—we might well summon up our utmost faculties to weigh and solve the problem, how the goodness of God could be justified in its creation. But now we can not, by any violence, insulate the fact of man's apostacy. The clouds which envelop our world have many rifts, through which the light is shining; nay, the world itself is all illuminated with this central truth, that with God is plenteous redemption, and human history is not all dark, nor our paths cheerless, nor our prospects desperate.

Our personal wisdom is in the acknowledgment of our personal unworthiness. Plead the power of temptation, the force of example, any form or number of inducements, and after all truth holds us fast to this unbribed and eternal testimony of conscience, that we have sinned, and every sin of ours must pass under judicial notice. Let us acknowledge it honestly and penitently, and find the humiliations of regret the door of hope, through which we enter upon the way of return to a second and better paradise.

IV.

HUMAN NATURE NOT SELF-RECUPERATIVE.

Whether we are able to explain the connection or not; whether we adopt this theory or that relative to the *manner* in which the whole human family are involved in the consequences of primeval transgression; whether we resolve it into the effect of evil example, or hereditary propensities, physical or moral, or unpropitious circumstances, or a judicial constitution, or federal headship—the fact is authenticated by Scripture, observation, and history, that, in some manner, our common nature has deteriorated from its original perfection.

The question now arises, whether the nature of man possesses any power of self-restoration? Let us state the problem more at length.

We began with considering man's original nature and condition. We saw him when he was the perfect image of his Maker. His body was perfect in its organi-

zation and functions. His mind was pure in its intelligence, with no mist of prejudice or superstition. His conscience was ignorant as yet of the very existence of evil. He rejoiced in the approbation and blessing of God. He was a stranger to fear, to sorrow, and to death. In a word, he was in a state of unmixed and unsullied blessedness. All this was forfeited by transgression. We have seen some of the woes which have been entailed upon our race—some of those baleful consequences which have been rolling down these many centuries, spreading themselves out far and fast as the race itself has extended—consequences which, in some manner, involve ourselves—and now we ask whether there be any power *in ourselves* to recover ourselves out of this condition? Can a ruined race restore itself, unaided by any foreign power? Let us consider how much is implied in these terms.

Can human nature reinstate itself in sinless *innocence?* We do not ask that the memory of sin should be extinguished. That which is past can not be recalled; and that which has been is fixed like rooted oaks and immoveable rocks. But can we ever review the past without the poignancy of remorse and the blush of shame? Can we ever reach the time and place in which the sin that has been shall shed on us no more of lurid glare, and sin for time to come shall not be at

all? Show us how it is that man, disabled, distressed as he is by a sense of unworthiness, may recover the consciousness of absolute innocence. It is a part of the problem which awaits our solution, whether man as he is, all men, may be restored to a state in which there shall be no disposition, no proclivity, no tendency whatever, to sin.

The problem is, whether the *body* of man can be delivered from all those consequences which came in with transgression. We would have it again free from disorder, deformity, and pain, as when it first came from the plastic hand of the Almighty. We would have it with no unhealthful appetite, no unregulated passion, no law in the members warring against the law in the mind; but in every regard perfect as it was when God pronounced it superlatively good.

The problem involves even more than this — that there should be no more discord and disagreement between the several properties of his intellectual and moral constitution. The will does not now obey the decisions of the reason. The affections do not now correspond to the judgment of the conscience. Hence there is strife and distress in the soul. We would have this unnatural discord cease for ever; so that the understanding, will, and affections, man's living personality, should be perfectly harmonized and united.

Moreover, it is involved in our inquiry that man

should regain a state of unmingled joy; that the last shadow should be chased away from his elevated brow, and the last fear be expelled from his heart. He is now subject to the visitations of sorrow. His head is bent, and his heart often broken, by trouble. Afflictions stalk unbidden into his home, and touch the sinews of his strength. Can he put himself beyond the reach and power of these strange visitants? Recall every element of that unblighted abode, in which no tear was ever shed, no sin was ever committed, but fullness of joy, and pleasures unmixed and uninterrupted, rolled their sparkling tides through the garden of God, and tell us whether it shall ever be regained?

Nor have we yet reached the limits of this great problem. Death came into the world in the footsteps of Sin. Can this terrific power be driven out from the world, and the gates barred for ever against his second intrusion? We wait to know whether man himself can defeat this great enemy; not only exempting himself from his power, but binding the desolating and destroying king, disarming and abolishing him for ever. Solve the question for aching anxiety—can man restore himself, so that he shall not see death? May he, by any self-recuperation, deliver himself from the curse which now bears the race to the grave, so that the young child shall not die, putting away from his lip the cup

of life untasted—nor the old man, when the cup has been drained to the bitterness of its dregs?

Give back to man his first and pleasant occupation: exchange labor, with its sweat and weariness, for simple work, with its elastic spring and delights. For mutual recrimination, envy, and jealousy, give to men confidence, harmony, and love, such as characterized the society of Eden. Drive out from the world every phantom shape of fear—every form of suffering, and shame, and wo; let not another grave disfigure the surface of the rejuvenated earth; let Death, with all the train of his gloomy attendants, be banished from the world which he has so long shadowed, so that his ravages shall be a faded memory of what has once been, and never again an actual reality; let the last vestige of evil disappear; the world, as it is, be made again as it was; guilt, sighs, fears, pains, repulsion from God, and God's displeasure, exchanged for innocence, delight, security, peace, pleasure, fullness of joy, and immortality! Anything short of this will not suffice. Can it be done? Can man accomplish it? How much of this has been, how much may we believe will be, achieved by the self-recuperative energy and elasticity of our afflicted nature?

The circumstances in which we come to the solution of the problem now stated are peculiar. We have the key to it in our possession. We are, and ever have

been, enjoying the positive revelation of divine help. We commenced our life in a Christian land; and the very first knowledge we acquired related to the name and services of a Saviour. We are already apprized of all which has been undertaken and promised by the Redeemer. That very sound, so familiar to our ears, which love hummed in grateful music over our cradle —*Jesus, the Saviour*—that pleasant word which, like the rays of the morning, has sent its cheerful light and hope into the darkness of this apostate world—the *gospel*—the glorious gospel of the blessed God—have assured us that a process of recovery and restoration is going on already—not yet perfected, but large and ample in its promises for the future. To convince ourselves how much we owe to this only hope of relief, we must, by an effort somewhat violent, endeavor to imagine the state of the world when, as yet, it was uncheered by the knowledge of divine interposition.

Perhaps it is not possible for the human mind, even through a process of the imagination, and that for any season, to divest itself of what it knows already, for an assured certainty. Precious stones will emit, even in darkness, some of the rays of the sun which they have absorbed in daylight. The body can not in a moment put out of its bones and muscles the vigor which it has acquired from the food on which it has long been nurtured. We can not throw ourselves into any depres-

sion so dark, that no ray from the cross of Christ will steal into the gloom. Nevertheless, we must endeavor, for a season, to imagine the state and condition of humanity, in which, with all the entailments and consequences of sin full and weighty upon it, all its proclivities strong and vigorous, no restorative process has been disclosed, and we are left unassisted to weigh the probabilities of its self-recovery. Great dishonesty is often practised by those who are unwilling to confess their entire indebtedness to the gospel of our Lord. Receiving the knowledge and the hopes of revelation into their minds from the beginning of existence — informed, instructed, and illuminated, by the promises of redemption — they are not sufficiently generous to acknowledge their obligations, but affirm how much may be gathered from Nature, and how little we need any superior assistance! The spoils which they collect from revelation are made to decorate their own idolatries. The very facts which belong to the Word of God, and to that only — the very cordials which have wrought reviving to our fainting nature — the very hopes with which the world is made brighter — their lineage is so far disowned, and their true origin so unfairly ignored, that humanity claims for itself all which has been achieved and promised by a superior help.

It is not unreasonable, therefore, to ask the reader to look at human history and human nature aside from

the restorative power of the Christian redemption. We dare not ask him to forget, even for an instant, the song of Bethlehem, the garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, the sepulchre of Joseph, and the mount of Ascension. We dare not ask him to let slip out of his mind the great sayings of Jesus, which have caused so many to hope, and which are the only anchor to man's tossed and imperiled soul. But we must ask it of him that, by a most careful and honest discrimination, he will separate what is human from what is divine — what has been accomplished by humanity itself, unaided and alone, and what has been undertaken and promised by the redemption of God.

And now, where is the instance, in the long life of our race, in which our ruined nature has recovered itself? Point us to one authenticated fact of history which proves that any community of men, or any individual out of all the race, by any spring and rebound of self-recuperation, have regained all which was lost by the apostacy. We have had dreams and philosophies, Utopian schemes and poetic illusions; we have had the convulsive efforts of necessity, and the spasms of fear and despair; but *who* and *where* were the men who have actually recovered themselves from the disasters of sin, and secured an absolute exemption from all the evils of transgression?

We have noticed with surprise that, concerning a

large space of time, in the early history of the world, the inspired annals furnish us with so little information. Sixteen centuries—almost as long as from the advent of Christ to this present time—are despatched, in sacred history, in the briefest possible mention. What was the meaning of that immense chasm and void in the life of our race? The world was full of people; but it was full of sin. May not this be the import of that historic lesson—to furnish, for all time, one undeniable proof that, left to himself, apostate man had no power or prospect of recovery? Knowledge of promised relief was limited: all which existed was in the form of tradition, and this growing fainter and fainter, like a dying echo; providential restraints were few; so to speak, God seems to have withdrawn himself from the race that sought to be independent of him, that the world might know, for all time, that ruined mind never restores itself; that the planet which breaks away from the attraction of the sun, finds no power within itself by which it is brought back, but its centrifugal force is multiplied with terrific speed, driving it farther and farther, faster and faster, into the blackness of darkness. Left to itself, the race of man increased in wickedness with such gigantic strides, that the earth and the skies sickened at the spectacle, and the waters of the great deep swept them away. The termination of that first long stage of human history was *the deluge*.

Blighted humanity did not recover itself. Sin raged on, exasperated and inflamed more and more. Though the experiment was measured by centuries, yet we can understand how this may prove a real economy of time, in the prolonged life of our race, if that which was wrought on so vast a scale will suffice for the world's conviction, so that the experiment need not to be repeated again. The very best illustration of what human nature would be, permitted to develop itself, without a written revelation, without a gospel, and without those corrective and restoring ideas and forces which the Christian religion has introduced, is presented in those sixteen hundred years of God's patience, when wickedness grew so mighty, that the Spirit, in recording the history, has described it only in general expressions, mercifully concealing from our view the spectacle of accumulated and unrestrained iniquity.

There has been no other period of time since that, in which the human race was left to its own development, without any application or promise of relief.

As the drama of Providence unfolds, religious institutions are appointed, and the true religion is gradually revealed. The world is never again to be as it was. That religion, indeed, was communicated to one only from among the many tribes of the earth. Some rays of it were ever shooting into the surrounding darkness. Traditions of the true religion were carried into the

"regions beyond." Ideas started on their endless circuits, and new thoughts began their eternal march. These rays of truth were refracted by the dense medium of superstition and ignorance, but their existence is to be traced to a celestial origin; so that the light they shed is not to be ascribed to man's power of self-recovery, but is a part of that restorative system which God has revealed to human helplessness.

The first great problem which tasked the reason of man was the *remission of sin*. Sin, as a fact, is to be noticed in some manner. We have seen what importance it gives to meanness, what conspicuity to obscurity. The human conscience, touched with the sense of demerit, has always admitted that sin must pass under the judicial attention of Supreme Power, and in *some manner* be disposed of. *How* shall it be disposed of? Shall it be forgiven? *How* can it be forgiven? Who shall assure the guilty of this welcome fact? Has Nature whispered it? What so unrelenting as Nature! She has smiles, caresses, and delights, for the innocent. But what power is so stern, inflexible, and mighty, as Nature to the guilty? Man violates her laws, and he meets the shock and recoil of naked power! There are no deviations nor alleviations to her undiverted penalties. Reason takes up the problem—weighs it—revolves it—and her verdict, as uttered by one of her highest oracles, is, "I see not how God can forgive sin."

There is no recovery for man, till sin, in some manner, be disposed of. The secret of its remission, has man ever discovered it? No bird of paradise has carolled it in his ear; the stars of the firmament have never so arranged themselves as to write it; the depth saith, "It is not in me," and the height answereth, "It is not with me;" the winds never proclaimed it, nor does the sea roll it out in its anthem; and, from all his questionings, reasonings, and strivings, man has fallen back upon the vain endeavor to propitiate offended power, and to make expiation for his own sin by means of his own sufferings. *Self-torture* is the creed of paganism. The uneasy sense of demerit man has sought to relieve by self-inflicted suffering. To this point man has been driven, in all times, by the stern power of an unappeased and unenlightened conscience. Has it accomplished what it pretends?

The real question is, have all the so-called expiations of men availed to quench remorse, reinstate conscious innocence, and secure a sense of God's favor? Is paganism successful in its project? Does Joy dwell in the temples of idolatry? Does Gladness make her abode among the worshippers of Moloch and Juggernaut? The mother who casts her wailing infant into the jaws of river-monsters, giving the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul; the man who swings on hooks which pierce the living flesh; the pilgrim who wends

his lonely way through long and weary miles — shall we affirm that they have discovered the long-hidden mystery? Are the acclamations of sober pleasure on their lips, and are they the most joyful and blessed of men? Have they accomplished their own restoration, expiated their own sins, won the complacent smile of their Maker, and reinstated themselves in peace and innocence? To affirm it were a falsity. They are the most miserable, pale, emaciated, forlorn, and abject, of the human race.

The *sorrows* which are in the world, it were impossible that man should not inquire how he must meet and remove them. Wisdom took up the problem, and pondered it long. We have her reasonings, debates, and conclusions. Her best counsel is, that we should bear in silence what we can not avoid. Exemption from suffering she could not promise: the soul must arm itself with indifference, and care not what befalls us. Between having and not having, between holding and losing, between smiles and tears, there is but a small distinction. Meet every event with stoical unconcern. Be impassable, by being insensible. This is philosophy. The question is, does the prescription accomplish what is needed? Was there no suffering in the heart of Zeno — no sorrow in the bosom of his disciples? Man was not a stoic in his innocence, insensible and impassive. That were not recovery and restoration,

which makes man, even if it could do as much, to bear suffering with compressed lips and a stout heart. We are asking for *exemption* from all occasions of suffering—for such a reinstatement in tearless joy as man experienced before he fell. Men do not eradicate the instinct of happiness, so they have snatched at intemperate joys, and indulged in frantic pleasures of sense, and murky visions of enjoyment have led them on; but it were needless to affirm that they have never found that fullness and purity of joy which reigned in sinless Eden.

Concerning the *inclination* to sin, has man discovered the power of its restraint and correction? It was the free-will of man, as we have seen, which was put on trial in the first probation. It is in man's free-will that the defect is seated which develops itself in sin. It is not that man's perception of right and wrong is destroyed, but that his *will* is disinclined to duty and right. Can this defect in the main-spring be remedied without the intervention of foreign aid? Increase man's knowledge, his will is not rectified. Reason may draw the right deductions, and reach the true conclusions, but the will does not necessarily go with them. The sentiment which the Christian apostle has recorded, when describing the impotence of human nature to reinstate itself—"That which I would, I do not; and that which I would not, that I do"—has been avowed almost in

the same language by many of the most distinguished of thinking men, who had not the light of the true religion. They could approve the good, while they were inclined to the evil. The *will*, deflected from the right, is not rectified by knowledge, by conscience, by law, by authority, by force, by fear. By what method can it be recovered to that which is good, without impairing its nature, and modifying its freedom? Has this ever been done by its own unassisted resolution?

Death came in with sin. Has man ever been able to recover himself from its power? Has he ever discovered the means of arresting decay, resupplying the waste of life, reproducing and perpetuating it? He has disciplined himself to rigid habits, prescribed the utmost simplicity, nurtured and regulated the body with extremest care; but at length it died. He has dreamed of an elixir, which, if discovered, would renew the enfeebled energies of life, and prolong it for ever. He has dreamed, again, of fountains possessed of such celestial properties, that old age should find itself rejuvenated, and the waning life of man be reproduced in perpetual vigor and beauty. But Death actually dissipated the dreams — entering the cell of the alchemist, busy with his illusions of prolonging mortal existence by philosophic art. The march of the destroyer was never stayed as yet by such follies and fancies; nor could man, following his desolating, burning footprints,

devise the method of a future restoration. Ancient poetry babbled of Elysian fields, of shades, of spirits in a land of spirits; but did man himself ever dream of the body's restoration, its resurrection to a second life, with power, honor, strength, beauty, and glory, transcending that frame which God himself fashioned out of the dust in the beginning? Never, not even in his dreams, has man conceived of this.

Then have we demonstrated the utter disability of man to recover himself from the direful penalties of transgression. He can not discover how sin can be forgiven; or noticed and disposed of, without visiting upon himself a deserved retribution. With all his expedients, efforts, and experiments, he has never succeeded in retrieving his losses, and regaining the position which he held anterior to apostacy. We have had the wisdom of the world, but it has not been a wisdom unto salvation. It was according to the wisdom of God that the power of man's self-restoration should be fully and fairly tested. Time enough was allowed for the experiment; four thousand years were finished before the Redeemer was born; the human faculties had ample time to mature and develop; each new generation had opportunity to borrow results and advantages from those which preceded; the highest wisdom of man was brought into play; unaided humanity has struggled up to the very highest summits which learning, wealth,

power, could reach—the experiment has been brought out in history—and that unevangelized development, like summer fruit, has perished in its own ripeness; having no self-preserving quality, and passing rapidly into decay and corruption.

Now that the redemption of Christ has applied its mighty leverage, and wrought so much, and promised the more, for man's restoration, there are many who, discarding divine help, trust to measures of their own devising; forswearing that gospel which is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and suggesting remedies and expedients of another quality. Now ascribing all the degeneracy of man to external circumstances, they propose to reorganize society—as if society itself were anything more or less than an exponent of the individuals who compose it. Now they suggest some novel method of physical training—as if the virus of sin were to be purged by simpler diet, a hardier life, and a better ablution; and now it is some poetic or philosophic fancy of indefinite perfectibility—along the line of which the life of our race is propelled by a predestined and irresistible necessity. Forces of prodigious might are indeed at work, slowly lifting up the deluged earth from its long depression, and revolving its surface into sunlight; but these are all of a celestial origin. Infidelity, and paganism even, share in the general benefits of that Christian redemption which they

utterly ignore — moving along with that world to which they belong, and which bears all things onward with itself.

Subtracting these new helps and attractions which the only true religion has introduced for the world's recovery, can you point us to any one generation in all the past, one tribe or people from among all the varied forms of human life, one individual out of our blighted and ruined race, that has succeeded in regaining the position which was held by man in the world's morning, with innocence, joy, fearlessness, and God's communion and benediction? If the solitary instance can not be authenticated, the conclusion which we reach is the utter impossibility of man's self-restoration. Unhelped of Heaven his impotence at recovery is complete. Left to himself, he is borne downward by a swift and mighty current. Resorting to his own remedies only, he is nothing better, but rather the worse.

That which he needs is something more than education, in the strict sense of the term — something more than can ever be educed out of himself — something more than growth, or development of what he now is. He needs what he has not in himself at all — an imparted power, a help from without — life unto the dead.

Some of the consequences of transgression — man might as well attempt to build a planet as to think of arresting them alone. He may put forth his puny arm to

stop the mighty forces which bind the universe, but he can not stay those eternal ordinances of Heaven which connect suffering and retribution with sin. He may strive, he may weep, he may resist, but he can not escape from the sheriff-grasp of death. It is hard to mend anything which is broken — to restore it to its original and normal integrity. The branch of a tree — if it be broken off, it is hard to attach it again — fibre to fibre, bark to bark — so that the sap shall course again through its living heart, and no unseemly scar disfigure its surface. A harder thing than this is to heal a broken confidence, restore a wounded affection, recover an alienated love, regain a lost innocence, reclaim a ruined mind, correct a perverse will, and redeem a fallen nature. A harder thing still is it, while accomplishing all this through the ministries of mercy, to adjust a disordered government, uphold a violated law, and provide for the sanctities and majesty of the ruling power. But the hardest thing of all, that which man's eye never had seen, nor his ear heard, nor his heart conceived, was to make sin the instrument of its own defeat; overruling and subjecting events after such a manner that apostacy should terminate in a higher elevation, shame in a stronger confidence, weakness in a greater strength, imbecility in a better security, hostility in a larger love, darkness in a brighter light, sorrow in a fuller joy, and death itself in a happier life. That which man

could not do, which confounds and abases his utmost wisdom, that God has done, is doing, and will do, for all who believe.

It remains for us to consider the nature of the relief which has actually been provided; the Being by whom it is brought; the wisdom of its adaptation; the power of its remedy; the results it has already achieved; and the promises which gild futurity with unclouded splendor. Even while we are meditating on man's helplessness — gazing at humanity wounded, fainting, and dying — we hear the joyful sound rolling along the upper sky, it falls on the ear of the perishing, it enters the cell of the prisoner, the chains of the captive begin to loosen, Hope stands ready to throw open the door: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: BUT IN ME IS THY HELP."

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

THE Saviour comes! by ancient bards foretold!
Hear him ye deaf, and all ye blind behold!
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day.
'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
And bid new music charm the unfolding ear:
The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,
And leap exulting like the bounding roe.
No sigh, no murmur, the wide world shall hear,
From ev'ry face he wipes off ev'ry tear.

POPE.

V.

MAN'S REDEMPTION.

The city of Jerusalem was the centre and religious metropolis of the world. It was designated as the city of God, and contained the temple and appointments of the only true religion.

Just to the east of this city, separated from the high walls by a valley, through which ran the brook Kidron, was the mount of Olives. Near the foot of the mount, and on its western slope, was a garden, filled with olive-trees, and affording an inviting retreat from the dust and noise of the city. The remains of this garden are still visible. A low, broken wall marks the bounds of the enclosure, within which are eight large olive-trees, whose age is measured by centuries, beneath the shelter of which many a traveller from the western world, in modern times, has reclined, and read out of the Bible the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and the closing chapters of the gospel by John.

Into this garden let us now enter. It is a beautiful land where it is situated, and this now in the blush and bloom of spring: but it is not *Eden*. It is night; and the night is cold, for it is not long before the mail-clad and hardy soldiers of Rome kindle a fire for themselves in the open court of the high-priest's palace. The night is dark, for men are soon groping about in it with lanterns. The wind sighs mournfully through the bending trees, and the heavy moisture drops from the leaves as if they were weeping. Everything seems to be infected with a strange sorrow. All is silence and solitude.

At an unwonted hour, twelve men are seen to go over the brook Kidron, and enter the garden. Four of the number separate themselves from the rest, and proceed still farther under the shadow of the trees. The principal person in the group arrests our attention by his deep depression. We overhear him saying to his companions, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He appears in the extreme of agony. Withdrawing into the deeper solitude of the garden, he kneels on the earth and prays: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." From his knees he falls prostrate on his face, there upon the damp, cold ground. He rises and returns to his three companions, as if he needed some expression of sympathy. His anguish allowing no rest, he goes a second time, and in

his prostration prays again: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Again he passes to and fro, in uncontrollable sorrow, and a third time we hear that cry of mournful supplication: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Cold though it was, the sweat oozed from every pore, and fell, like clotted blood, to the ground. Whatever the occasion of this extraordinary suffering, its nature was spiritual; for there was no violence, no torture, no laceration of the person by cruel hands. It was the solitary wo of the soul within; yet was it so intense, that an angel from heaven came to minister to the fainting strength of that pale and prostrate form. Presently an armed band make their appearance, lay hands upon him, bind him, and lead him away. Hurried through the mockeries of trial, He, who, a little before, was in an agony of spirit, now, in extremity of torture, hangs upon the cross. Death closes the scene. The sun veils his face, and a great horror of darkness settles upon the earth. In another garden, not far distant, was a sepulchre, where that crucified body was laid.

Who was that sufferer? Why did he suffer? We have not abruptly terminated or changed the topic of the preceding pages. Remote in space as were these two enclosures, Eden and Gethsemane, intimately related are they in human history.

There have been other sufferers and other sorrows, to which we bear no relation whatever, save through the sympathies of pity. But the sufferings of Gethsemane and Calvary have a world-wide relation. They are central facts in the long and wide history of humanity. Whether one is infected by sympathy with that sorrow, or whether he is thoroughly unmoved and skeptical concerning it, it stands in actual connection with all the preceding and subsequent events in the life of our race. Throughout Christendom, time is actually reckoned by its relations to the Being whom we have seen in the prostration of Gethsemane. The infidel who yesterday drew a note of hand in New York, Paris, or Frankfort, appended to it certain figures which denoted that this was the year 1856, as computed from the advent of JESUS CHRIST. We found our chronology on that central event, and measure time before and after the birth of that Being who was nailed to the cross.

The first thing to be observed in regard to this extraordinary personage, whoever he was — whatever the cause or the consequences of his sufferings — is, that his life was not an isolated event. It is connected with the whole structure of human history — with the life of man from the beginning, and with the life of man unto the end.

Who was that sufferer? That form we have seen before. It is He who was born at Bethlehem; himself

in the lowliest penury, yet signal-stars and angelic choruses heralding and gracing his advent. It is he who was promised to the fallen pair in Eden, the seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head. It is he who was foretold as about to dwell in the tents of Shem, enlarging them above the glory of Japhet. It is he concerning whom it was said to Abraham, beneath the numberless stars of the eastern heavens, "In him shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It is he of whom the patriarch Jacob did speak, when, like the dying swan, he broke into one and only strain of prophetic song: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, until the Shiloh, the Peacemaker, shall come, whom all the nations should obey." He it is concerning whom Balaam, the seer of Edom, with most reluctant testimony, was compelled to predict as the Star and the Ruler who should come forth from Jacob. The same of whom Moses spake as the Prophet whom the Lord God should raise up unto whom the world should hearken. It is he of whom David wrote in the Psalms, calling him Lord, and King, the Son of God, the Christ, the anointed one, and the Priest—now waking the echoes of the mount of Olives, as with jubilant songs he described the splendors of his imperial reign, and the glories of his triumphant and universal dominion—and now again, with plaintive measure, as with all minuteness he rehearsed his humiliations and sufferings, his

betrayal by a false friend, the parting of his garments by lot, the piercing of his hands and feet, the pouring out of his soul like water, the entombment of his body, and its resurrection while yet uncorrupted by decay. It is he of whom Isaiah spake, as with lips touched with fire from heaven, and wrote with a pen dipped in the glories of the skies, as the Deliverer, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the tried and sure corner-stone, Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace, the renovator of the world, the isles waiting for his law; a *child* to be born, yet bearing the name of THE WONDERFUL, THE COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER. It is he of whom Ezekiel wrote, by the river Chebar, as the Glory of God, by whom the earth was to be made to shine. It is he of whom Daniel spake, as the Prince, the Messiah, who was to be cut off, but not for himself, that he might make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Amos the herdsman foretold his coming as a Deliverer, and Micah rejoiced in his advent. Zechariah describes his royal Priesthood; Haggai anticipates his footsteps as the glory of the second temple, the Lord our righteousness; and Malachi, prolonging the notes of this whole choir of prophecy, bids the world believe that the Messenger of the covenant is nigh at hand, and the Sun of Righteousness is soon to rise upon the benighted earth.

All the pregnant and germinant prophecies of Scrip-

ture relate to that Being whose form we have seen in the garden of Sorrow. The long procession of the centuries had been pointing to him. His precursors summon the world to make ready for his approach. When he was born, there was heard a company of angels chanting in the sky: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to man." When he spake unto men, he claimed to be the very being whom prophecy had promised, and Nature obeyed him as her Lord. He challenged the faith of the world, when he styled himself the way, the truth, and the life, predicting his own lifting up upon the cross as the appointed method of drawing all men unto himself.

Plainly, the historic events which occurred in and about Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago, were not unanticipated accidents. The life of Christ was a prepared and foretold certainty. A cheering fact is this with which to begin — the assured conviction that it was God's intention to redeem and restore our fallen race. The first probation of human nature issuing in disappointment and disaster, a second was prepared under new and peculiar auspices. Man unable to recover himself, God has undertaken that recovery by his own wisdom and power. God and not man is the author of redemption. Nor was this an after-thought — a newly-devised expedient — resorted to as a remedy to an unexpected mischief. It was the eternal purpose of God before

the foundations of the earth were laid. He has himself instructed us that the redemption of man, transcending his creation, was the object about which all the affairs of time were to revolve. Man's apostacy was not a sudden surprise to Him before whose omniscience lay all contingencies and possibilities. Therefore the race of man was not extinguished when sin entered. The earth was not swept away, like a lost star, and another spoken into being to fill its place. The life of humanity was not abruptly terminated. The race was spared. Reprieve was granted, and the purposes of redemption begin their wonderful developments. So was it in the wisdom of God that this method of human restoration was not revealed in its completeness on its first announcement. As great growths of great forests are included in the small germ of the parent-seed, so are all the hopes and prospects of restoration which now gladden the world the development of that one promise which was made to the first man, after the first sin. When he passed out of Eden he did not pass into despair. A new element entered into his existence — unknown in innocence, unknown in the first consciousness of shame — the promised mercy of his offended Maker. That mercy has been revealed in fuller measure — till now the gospel of our Lord has disclosed it in all its amplitude. These are tidings of great joy to our fallen

race. Wearied, disabled, afflicted, in all forms and stages of its diversified life, the nature of man is destined to be restored. God is doing and will do for man what man never could do for himself. Plain enough, the fulcrum and the power of that mighty leverage which is to lift up our fallen race must be outside of the race itself. That power is the LOVE OF GOD.

If one has ever allowed himself to think hardly of his Maker; if ever he was bewildered and troubled by reason of the woes, the sins, and the sufferings of the world, as if he were in doubt whether the goodness of God ever could be vindicated in permitting the earth to be blighted and cursed by sin as it is; remember that that fact does not describe nor exhaust the world's history — that was not the end of the world's life — and man was not deserted and abandoned in his utmost need. The world is not always to be as it was — or as it is now. The issue of the second probation, through which our race is now passing, will not be a failure. There is a way in which all the evils of transgression may be amply and for ever remedied. Be not faithless but believing while we treat of the mode in which every man may be delivered from all the power and proneness of sin — all the disabilities and entailments of sin — and ultimately from all the consequences of sin. The promises of the gospel relate to a better condition than man ever knew in his innocence. High as

was his original position, deep as was his fall, his recovery by the grace of the Redeemer will exalt him and confirm him in a state far above that which he enjoyed in sinless Paradise. He shall be freely forgiven —his sins shall not be remembered against him, and again he shall walk with God in joyful fellowship.

The foremost feature of the second probation on which man was placed is that his well-being is not made to depend on mere obedience to divine law. Sinless obedience was the nature and description of the first trial of our race. But never again is it made the sole hope and dependence of man. Our probation turns wholly on the treatment which we bestow upon the means of relief, and the promises of mercy. It is our conduct in reference to the method of redemption which is to decide and determine our character and condition. It is mercy—in the strict sense of that term, as distinguished from mere benevolence—dispensing gratuity to unworthiness—which presides over the second, chief, and last stage of human probation. Not that the law of God is abrogated or modified in one jot or tittle; but in this regard we are not under law; our eternal salvation does not depend upon its perfect obedience; but we are under grace—inasmuch as a method of forgiveness and restoration is revealed for those who are defective and disobedient. We are not left to our obedience that we may be

justified; but we are to obey, because we are justified. This is the first general description of that probationary state, on which we, in common with our race, are now placed. To this fact attention is directed thus early that we may understand that no revelation of mere law, in whatever form that revelation is made, whether in specific statutes or in a living model, in a written law or a faultless example, will ever meet the necessities of our fallen nature. It was not owing to any deficiency of knowledge in respect to the rule of duty, that the failure of man was to be ascribed, on his first trial, upon principles of obedience; it is not because the statutes of God's realm have been imperfectly understood that man has ever since shown himself incapable of self-restoration; the mere repetition of law, therefore, in whatever form, is but renewing the probation to which our nature was subjected at the beginning, and proclaiming anew those defects which have already been made sufficiently evident. Some new terms, new conditions, new helps, new motives, new powers, are needed; and these, as we shall see, belong to that new stage and state through which our blighted nature is passing, under the auspices of the Redeemer.

Believing that the gospel of Christ accomplishes man's restoration, not arbitrarily, but by means of its moral adaptation to our nature and circumstances, we

are to study that adaptation, and inquire more into the character of that sufferer, whose every act, in the garden and on the cross, appears in some manner to be related to the recovery of our fallen race.

Who was that sufferer? We are not left to draw our opinions concerning him from what we behold in this scene of agony alone. This is only one incident in his life, the whole of which is described to our belief in the inspired annals. We are to gather all the facts which are revealed concerning him from the beginning to the end of the sacred volume, and, combining them together, adding nothing, omitting nothing, we are to learn what qualities met in his person, fitting him to be the Redeemer and Restorer of man.

Never did another such Being walk upon this earth. He is without a compeer, a precedent, or a parallel. We have rehearsed some of the remarkable names and titles which he bears. No other being was ever predicted for so long a time, or with such a stress and import of expectation. He was a man, else he could not suffer at all. He was something more than man, else his sufferings could not avail for man's recovery; and it is his sufferings and death, as we shall see, which in some way are the essential means of human redemption. He was a man, that he might partake of that nature which was to be restored; he was more than a man, that in him might be found that power of restora-

tion which was not in man at all. He had the body of a man, else he could not have passed under death; he had a divine power allied therewith, else he could not show how that very body should be raised and glorified beyond all pains and humiliations. A man himself, that he might sympathize with the nature he would relieve — sharing in its utmost depressions and privations: more than a man, that he might lift up that nature to his own level. An eye had he that could weep in pity; a hand that could wipe tears away. A man, innocent of sin, for, had he shared in guilt, he had been disqualified as a helper: more than a man, else he had no power to absolve from sin. Of our race, and yet above it: with man, and yet superior to man: made lower than the angels, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man; yet higher far than all the angels, that he might crown man at last with glory and honor. Made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, making reconciliation for the sins of the people; yet greater and higher than man ever can be, that he might vindicate the honor of law, and uphold the majesty of supreme dominion. *He was human—he was divine.* In his own person was the tangential point between the two natures which sin had sundered. Immediately related was he to the parties between whom reconciliation needs to be effected. He shared the nature of

both. He was the mediator between God and man—man's advocate, priest, intercessor, representative, and God's image and representative too. He was the GOD-MAN.

As at the beginning God and man were associated in perfect fellowship, even as the sky and the earth seem to touch in the morning along the horizon—so, in the person of Jesus Christ, divinity and humanity are actually blended together—the one condescending in its humiliation, the other lifted up in its exaltation; prefiguring to our faith that time which is to come when our depressed, wounded, and afflicted nature shall rise again even to a celestial promotion.

Concerning the possibilities and modes of such a union of qualities in the Redeemer, we stop not to philosophize. We enter upon no analysis of that conjunction of distinct natures which existed in the one Being who is our Saviour. We have read and heard of many learned terms which pretend to explain it, but prefer the simple facts of inspired revelation—knowing full well that a Being uniting such distinct and dissimilar properties in himself, as he is beyond the sphere of our experience, must be as yet beyond the range of our comprehension. Before this great mystery of godliness we bow with a veiled face and wondering eye, even as do the angels: "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto

the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

What and why did he suffer! God forbid that upon such a theme our folly should intrude with the suggestion of reasons above what is written. One thing is patent and palpable throughout the whole of the Scriptures. The *sufferings* of Christ are revealed as in some manner the reason, in view of which the human race is redeemed. The agonies of the Redeemer in Gethsemane and on Calvary are not mere incidents and appendages to something else more important. It is by Christ's *suffering* for sins that we, in some manner, are delivered from sin. It is by his *death* that we are made to live. His teachings were of superhuman wisdom and authority; his example was of spotless perfection; but it is his bitter passion, his tasting of death, his cross, which are everywhere set forth—whether in the Old Testament, in the form of the bleeding lamb, or in the New Testament, in the form of didactic statement—as the one reason and method of man's restoration.

Sin always entails suffering. We can not conceive of it without its involving consequences sad and painful. Those consequences are in some manner to be disposed of. Christ himself was without sin. Yet he was a sufferer. That form which lies on the ground in the garden is not broken-hearted Penitence seeking out solitude to weep, and mourn, and pray. It is Innocence,

yet innocence in agony. A deep mystery this in the righteous government of God. The solution, baffling our wisdom, God has himself revealed it unto us. He who himself knew no sin, was made sin for us. Those sufferings were of a *vicarious* nature; and in some way Christ delivers us from suffering, by assuming suffering himself. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquity. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." After some manner the sufferings of Innocence availed for the redemption of guilt. The sin which was committed in the garden of Eden, and which had been rolling its accumulated woes for ages, was, by some process, related to all the suffering which was endured in Gethsemane and upon the cross. We are to inquire what power there was in that vicarious endurance to meet the necessities of man's condition, accomplishing in his behalf what no recuperative power of his own could promise.

The way to the heavenly paradise, toward which we have turned our faces in hope, is not through the garden of Eden, for all traces of it are lost to the world, so that man need not delude himself with travelling afar to renew it; but it doth lie directly through the garden of Gethsemane. That enclosure, where the Redeemer sorrowed and suffered, we must enter. We

must pass under the gloomy shadow of that great agony. We must stand and see the sufferer in his mortal anguish. We must mingle with the group before his cross. We must look upon the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Our path leads through the very sepulchre where the body of Jesus was laid. With gratitude, faith, hope, penitence, let us approach the scene. Fear not to enter the garden of Sorrow. Shrink not from looking upon the cross. Start not back from the sepulchre. There are no ruffian bands to arrest — no tragic crucifixion to torture — no terrors of death to get hold of us; for, wonder of wonders, we, even we, can think of sin, and death, and the grave, with a strange calmness: for peace comes with penitence, and hope shines through all the tears of conscious unworthiness and helplessness. Our Great Helper, Deliverer, Restorer, says to all who will trust in him, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

VI.

REASON FOR REMISSION.

We see sun, moon, and stars, and rejoice in their light, long before we have any conception of scientific astronomy. We breathe the pure and tonic air before we know how to analyze its composition. Our hearts catch the gladness of the fact that God designs to redeem the human race, before we are fully acquainted with the nature and relations of that method by which redemption is accomplished.

Beholding that wonderful person, in agony and death, on whom all the rays of prophecy converge, and to whom Hope was ever pointing as the Restorer of man, the inquiry is prompted how were those sufferings related to human redemption.

The first great necessity in the recovery of man is to assure him of some method by which he may be exempted from all the penalties incurred by transgression.

Vain is it to attempt *reformations* until reason and conscience are certified of the fact that sins already committed may be forgiven; and that we are placed upon an immunity from retribution where remedial agencies may resuscitate our disabled nature. Sin must, in some manner, be disposed of; and we are confident that the method actually proclaimed is capable of being so stated as to commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The atonement is not a mystery in such a sense as to be above our comprehension. Once it was hid from ages and generations, but now it is revealed. Sages wondered what was the import of the predictions which they uttered concerning the Christ, to whom, but not to us, the solution was denied. Mysteries, indeed, are connected with all truth, even the simplest — travel in any direction, we reach the ocean sooner or later — but the mode which God has revealed by which to justify the guilty is not ambiguous or enigmatical, since it demands the intelligent assent and faith of childhood.

In one of the royal galleries of Paris there is a striking picture, the moral of which is irresistible. The prominent figure is that of JUSTICE — a female form seated on her throne, a radiant star upon her brow, a sword in one hand, and the other holding her symbolical scales, resting on the head of a huge lion, who, with keenest vigilance, keeps watch at the side of his mis-

tress. Over this portion of the picture is an air of severity and firmness, softened by celestial benignity. In the foreground is a group, consisting of a husbandman (the unharnessed plough is at his side), in the softest sleep of night. Upon his breast reposes the head of his wife, and in her arms lies their slumbering infant, while one hand of the mother, in unconscious security, rests on the knee of enthroned Justice. A great truth is admirably illustrated by the artist—security, peace, and happiness, beneath the protection of benignant law. So prone are we to associate stern and unlovely qualities with law and justice, that we must pause ere we proceed, disabuse our minds of all such falsities, and direct them, in an impartial judgment, to this very point—the benevolence of God as exhibited in his most holy law.

We begin by rehearsing some of the simplest rudiments of religion.

We live under the moral government of God. Because he is a Spirit, he is not to be idealized out of his supremacy. Spirit is something more than light, or air, or motion, or perfume, or unthinking energy, sometimes called Nature.

Made in the divine image, we are controlled, not by mechanical laws, neither by caprice, but by statutes addressed to our intelligence and affections. The law

which God has revealed, requiring us to love him supremely and our fellow-men as we love ourselves, is the transcript of his own nature, and the rule of development for our own. Less he could not require, without departing from his own benevolence, and doing an injury to his own offspring. This revelation, moreover, assumes the form of *law*. It is enforced by means of adequate motives. Among these is the penalty attached to disobedience. A law without penalty loses its distinctive character, and assumes that of mere opinion or counsel. The remission of penalties, *in all instances*, is equivalent to the abrogation of law itself. A statute, however excellent its requisitions, which promises impunity to all who fail to observe it, loses its character as *law*, and promulgates its own imbecility and impotence.

If, now, without any compensatory reason, it were announced from the vault of heaven that the law of God was repealed, or that no sin would ever come under judicial notice, clouds and darkness would gather over our heads, and terror would reign, for this would be equivalent to the proclamation that Malevolence had usurped the throne of Love, and sin, uninterdicted and unbridled, would reign and rage through the wreck and ruin of the world! No truth can be more clear or stable than this, that the justice of God, as exhibited in his most holy law, is the kind and conservative

power which looks to the protection and blessedness of the universe.

If, then, the law of God is holy, just, and good, and the benevolence of God is pledged to maintain it, we are set to the solution of a great problem: How may its penalties be remitted, and the guilty restored to a position such as would have been theirs had they never sinned?

The question is not how penalty may be remitted in a few instances, now and then, here and there, in view of special reasons; but how it may be suspended universally, without exception and without reserve. How may the remission of sin and penalty be divulged just as widely as the law itself, and the moral force and authority of that law be unimpaired?

To expatiate on the mercy of God is but an evasion of the problem, since the inquiry is, how may that mercy be *applied?* It is the glory of heaven and the joy of the whole earth that the throne is occupied by Infinite Love. Washington was merciful; yet he signed the death-warrant of Andre. Indeed, it is well authenticated that such was the pity of his noble heart on that occasion, that his tears fell upon the words which he wrote. That judge was merciful who, on the occasion of pronouncing sentence of death on a culprit convicted of wilful murder, was so overpowered by the tender emotions of his heart, that he involuntarily rose, and,

with streaming eyes, commended the miserable man to God in fervent prayer.

We stand not in doubt concerning the mercy of our Maker; we ask not for further proofs of its existence; neither can any increase be made to that which is already beyond measurement. We have sometimes feared that many of the objections which have been urged against the atonement have proceeded from the great misconception that it was designed to propitiate the Almighty, and accomplish some change in his feelings toward the guilty. It is a sufficient reply to all such misapprehensions, that the atonement is the effect and not the cause of divine mercy. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The affrighted imagination may conceive of heathen deities as appeased and propitiated by sacrifices; but the LOVE which originated the gospel, making expression of itself in the act of redemption, can in no sense be regarded as the result and product of that achievement. It is not the absence of benignant qualities which restrains an honored magistrate from releasing every criminal convicted of pillage and bloodshed. Compassionate though he be, he is restrained from making clemency the general law—seeing that the invariable exercise of the pardoning power would be synonymous with lawlessness. The goodness of God is not

weak sentimentality, nor can it weaken the force of that law which is the reflection of his blessedness and the security of our own; and to proclaim, simultaneously with the requirements of his own legislation, free and unlimited impunity for all sins past, present, and future, would be equivalent to the annulling of the law itself.

It is over this obscure and inexplicable problem that light from heaven has been poured in abundance. The great mystery has been solved. The wonders of creation fade into dimness in comparison with the miracle of redemption. The pallid lips of Despair may sing for joy. The very rocks and trees are invoked to break forth into music because of this grand discovery. God has revealed a way by which he may be just—maintaining the full force and sanctity of his law—and yet justify all men that believe—treating them as though they had not sinned at all: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the import of particular words in this pregnant passage, there can be no discrepancy as to the historic fact that the *death of Jesus Christ* is THE REASON in view of

which man receives remission of sin, and exemption from merited penalty.

That reason is something more than the perfection of Christ's character, as a model for human imitation, or the excellency of his doctrines as the world's Teacher, for these offices of the Redeemer do not furnish any solution of that problem which has been presented by the exigences of man's condition. The life of Christ as a mere example of obedience is only another and better revelation of law. It is the law made manifest in a living form, instead of characters graven on stone or inscribed on parchment. It is the law personified, the law exemplified, the law fulfilled. Still it is the law; and if Christ be nothing more than man's exemplar and teacher, then are we to look to law for our justification—the old probation is repeated and the mystery already propounded remains unsolved. How can any new rule of duty avail for the remission of sins that *are past?* On condition that we copy it and conform to it hereafter? Then you impose a condition in view of which we are to be saved; and that condition is conformity to impersonated law, and you take away from such as are conscious of defection the gratuity of the gospel. If the Sufferer was merely man's teacher and model, then he could avail for man's advantage only as his teachings were obeyed and his example followed. But what if that conformity be

wholly wanting? You have not once hinted at the real necessity of guilt, nor alluded as yet to that momentous inquiry which the heart aches to solve, How mercy may be applied to a fallen world without impairing the force of that law which is the product and expression of infinite love. Here is a thief upon the cross; in the very act of dying he begins to pray. Will it give hope and comfort to conscious guilt to hold up to his glazed and rayless eye the model of perfect goodness?

Go into the heart of heathenism and find the thoughtful man who is self-impeached of defect, and drawing nigh to the close of life with manifold misgivings. Inform him of the one man who obeyed the Divine law to its last letter. Borrow the fervor of inspiration in describing the glory of this faultless model; will it light one smile on the wan cheek of conscious guilt, or kindle hope in his soul, when past sins rise up around him like sheeted spectres? Man is already confounded and distressed because of his infractions of law, and you carry his ideas of law higher and higher, even up to infinite perfection. Struggling with the sense of sin and demerit, you only instruct him the more concerning the capacities of his nature, and bid him look at the living impersonation of law. Every glance at that faultless model convicts him, and wakes into agony the consciousness of the immense interval which separates him

from perfection. No glad tidings are here: nor can Law, in any form of revelation, inform us how the transgression of law can be forgiven.

The glorious gospel of the blessed God is far in advance of all revelation of law and duty. Christ, as a propitiation for sin, is distinct from Christ as an example. Redemption through his blood is more than teaching by his words. Remission of sins that are past is different from exemption from sin for time to come.

Presumption is it to intrude here beyond what God has revealed, but that which he himself has disclosed is to be received with gladness. The death of Jesus Christ, after some manner, presents a *reason* because of which the penalties of law may be remitted while the great ends and objects of law are secured. It is a grand moral expedient substituted in the place of merited penalty, which, for all motives and impressions, answers even better than the penalty itself the great purpose of law, while mercy has its ample application to the lawless. Talk not of the mysteries of this redemption, for without it we are involved in greater mysteries still. Pervert not its statement. It is love supreme and infinite, the author of law, manifesting itself in a human form, and in its own voluntary endurances presenting to the human conscience an adequate reason, in view of which a sinful race may be acquitted and justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is

CHRIST THAT DIED. Remission of sin is in view of a compensatory reason, and that reason is higher and ampler than any other that can be conceived of. It is the plea which inspiration has put upon the tremulous lips of guilt. *Christ has died.* Manifold speculations there may be as to the precise nature of those sufferings which were endured by our Redeemer, but rational faith avoiding those human appendages which confuse and mislead, is satisfied with this revealed fact, that by the offering up of himself the Lamb of God was the one adequate reason in view of which sins that are past may be remitted, remitted freely and remitted for ever. The gospel does not declare our innocence: but it is God's method of treating men as though they were innocent, justifying the guilty when justification by the law was impossible.

Here is accomplished the first great requisite of man's recovery. He is reinstated in such a position that reformatory agencies may be applied to his restoration. The method has been tested by experience and found to execute all which it promises. The reason of pardon satisfies the human conscience, and imparts a profound and rational peace. This is the sign and seal of its celestial origin. If the Highest Power in the universe acquits, in view of compensatory considerations of its own, what occasion for fear remains? If God justifies, there is none to condemn. The resting-

place of faith is high and strong—eternal Rock. Sensible of his own demerits, man is taught the strain of exultation—"I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, is able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

Hope dawns on the gloom of guilt, and the soul justified by faith has peace. Before, a disquieted conscience occasioned constant foreboding and looking for of judgment; but now "peace in believing" ensues oft as the plea is confided in—Christ has died. Like the troubled sea that can not rest, casting up mire and dirt, is the soul when harassed by the sense of unforgiven sin: but when faith intelligently apprehends the gospel, the conscience responding to that reason which Christ has interposed, there is a great calm. How perfectly this scriptural imagery corresponds to the experience of thousands. You have stood by the side of the sea when its surges were lashed into foam by the wing of the storm—when the terrific blast drowned your puny voice as deep called unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, and the wild birds screamed their melancholy cry, for they could not rest, and weeds and wrecks came drifting to the shore, and the deep, black, and turbid waves were the image of all which was terrible: but the wind went down,

the surges fell, the storm passed off, and a sudden sun-gleam broke over the changed scene, and at length the sea became as a molten looking-glass, through whose translucent waters you could see the fish, the pebble, and the plant, and birds of calm, with their soft and silver plumage sat and swung on the pliant wave. Not less striking is the transition in the human soul from the stormy agitation which often accompanies conscious demerit to the peace which follows a cordial acceptance of the gospel gratuity.

The mode in which the love of God has made expression of itself proves and evidences itself by the effects which it produces. We need not toil and travel far to discover illustrations of the fact that a belief in that method which God has revealed as a substitute for judicial retribution has resulted in deep and permanent tranquillity. Men who can not be suspected of credulity, or weakness, or illusion, have tried it with uniform results. If anything can be established by human testimony, it is the fact that faith in Jesus Christ, in distinction from all personal merit of our own, is capable of imparting a consolation to the quickened consciousness of man such as nothing else can inspire.

One of the greatest of living scholars,* writing to his bosom-friend, thus describes a change which occurred in his long-agitated and tempest-tossed soul: "The

* Tholuck.

overbearing spirit in me is humbled, the heart of stone is broken. I can truly say that I am nothing great in my own eyes. I am the most unworthy among the children of men. I am still very much cast down, but I can not tell you what a mild zephyr breathes upon my cheek in the midst of all my sadness. Sometimes when I sit alone, distressed with the thought of my guilt, a secret voice whispers, 'God is thy friend.' At such hours a peaceful joy, a heavenly delight, unknown till now, fills my soul, and I must weep much and long. In every calm I had before there was a restlessness at the bottom, but now my restlessness bespeaks a calm. My whole inward life is like a summer evening when the sun is just setting. I know not whether I am already regenerated, but this I know, it is something unspeakably blissful to be a true believer in Christ. By means of the insight into my misery and corruption, I seem to have obtained permission to raise at times, for a moment, the curtain of a great sanctuary. After such a glimpse my soul is filled with so joyous a trembling that I would be willing to wait patiently before the curtain for years, after having once seen the glories behind."

This is not mysticism, neither is it illusion. THE LAMB OF GOD TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD. Human theories, like a mist before the sun, may obstruct and becloud the light of this great fact; but received

as a fact, with humble faith, it inspires gratitude, diffuses peace, and imparts strong consolation. Here is a reason out of ourselves—higher, stronger than ourselves—which is as an anchor to the soul. Condemned by the written law, condemned by his own conscience, man places his hand on the cross of Christ and repeats the great words of his faith: "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a* PROPITIATION *through faith in his* BLOOD, *to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are* PAST, *through the forbearance of God.*" The pillars of heaven may tremble, but he who trusts in God's mode of justifying the guilty shall never be afraid.

VII.

HUMAN NATURE RESUSCITATED.

Rectified in our relations to law and government, we are open now and accessible to all the kind and potent influences by which our own natures may be renovated and restored.

Before proceeding to treat of those agencies which are adapted to work the greatest of changes in our will and affections, let us comfort ourselves with some conception of the entireness, freeness, and fullness, of that exemption which is secured to us by the mediation of Jesus Christ. We do not mean that the condition of the human race is necessarily better since Christ died; that all mankind are, by that act of their Redeemer, saved, whether they will it or not—for redemption demands our credence and our trust—but we mean that, on those conditions of simple faith and acceptance, the act of Christ completely restores and reinstates in a condition of ultimate immunity from all evil.

There is no danger of extravagance or exaggeration in the statement of our faith on this topic; for no expression and no conception of the completeness of man's forgiveness can surpass the actual language of God's Word. It would seem to be enough, when we are assured that the act of Christ avails in our behalf to such a degree, that, in God's regard, and God's treatment of us, we are as if we never had sinned at all. Our relations to law, to penalty, to condemnation, become as these would be if the law never had been violated, the penalty never incurred, and the condemnation never had been merited. In the forbearance, wisdom, and love of God, the way is disclosed by which the Supreme Ruler of the universe may deal with us as he dealt with man in his original and glorious innocence — smiling on him, blessing him, having communion with him; when that smile had no cloud, that blessing no reserve, and that communion no obstruction. If this does not satisfy us, we are bidden to receive another assurance, higher and greater still. Our relations to the Ruling Power are so completely rectified by the act of Christ, that, by faith in him, we are treated as if we were in Christ's own stead, in actual possession of Christ's own perfection. The actual transfer of moral qualities, of guilt and of holiness, from one person to another — interchanging one with another — is beyond our conception or belief. Our guilt never can be transferred to Jesus

Christ in such a sense that he is guilty, nor his holiness be transferred to us in such a sense that we are holy as he.

But, in the *treatment* which we receive from the Being who rules the world, we are promised exemptions and blessings such as would have been ours had we always been as holy and harmless as the Son of God. The "righteousness" of Christ is "*imputed*" to us, in this sense — that, in the abundance of his mercy, we are to be *treated* as if we were righteous as Jesus Christ. Let there be no reserve in our faith in this matter. Let no fear nor shame prevent us from rising to the "height of this great argument." If this were language written or spoken by man, in the exultations of excited hope, we might be incredulous as to its truth; but the mouth of the Lord first uttered it, and the pen of the Holy Ghost first recorded it. The righteousness of God! — the righteousness of our Redeemer! We to be regarded and treated as if this righteousness were our personal quality and property! — as if we were holy as God himself — holy as his spotless Son! The magnanimity of God is nothing less than this. When he describes the method of his forgiveness, it is with an affluence of promise such as compares only with his own infinity. Not only does he forgive, but forgives freely. He forgives, and remembers not. He forgives, and blots out iniquity. He forgives even to the utter-

most. He forgives exceeding abundantly, above all we can ask or think. We read not only of redemption, but of *plenteous* redemption; not only of mercy, but of *tender* mercy; not only of kindness, but of *loving*-kindness; and these repeated and multiplied beyond plural forms, into the "multitude of his loving-kindnesses." To read of grace sufficient for us—grace from the throne—were enough; but this is amplified into "abundant" grace—"exceeding abundant"—"superabundant"—grace "immense"—grace "manifold"—the "riches of his grace"—the "exceeding riches of his grace"—the "riches of the glory of his grace." It would seem that, on that point, where fallen humanity needed "strong consolation," all the fullness of God were poured into the very language which assures us of the entire oblivion to which sins "that are *past*" shall be consigned, and the entire rectification of the fallen in reference to judicial and retributive notice.

Nor have we presented the full testimony of revelation on this point, till we are reminded that this act of the Redeemer is adequate to the restoration of the whole human race. Such are the views we entertain of the work of Christ, that, while we are constrained to believe that necessarily and arbitrarily it saves no man, in its adaptation it is abundantly equal to the salvation of all men. The language of Scripture in regard to this is very explicit: "He tasted death *for*

every man." — "The Lamb of God taketh away the *sin of the world.*" The gospel of the Redeemer is to be preached to *every creature*. It is to be sent forth into all the earth. Nowhere in the New Testament do we receive the impression that the expiation of Jesus Christ was adapted in its nature to the salvation only of a minority. It is the human race upon which the blight of sin has fallen. The redemption we seek must be commensurate with the ruin we deplore. Those who stand at the left hand of the Judge in the last day are condemned because they believed not on the Son of God. It is the act of men in regard to the redemption of Jesus Christ which arbitrates their destiny in the closing up of this peculiar and final probation of human nature. No other proof is wanting of the fact that for such the promises of the gospel were ample and adequate; for who would impute to Sovereign Equity the judicial condemnation of any for rejecting a method of relief which for them was never designed, or equal? We find no limits to the fullness of that redemption which is by Jesus Christ, considered in its adaptation to the moral recovery of the human race. It is coextensive with the law of God, and that is universal. It superabounds above the evil it would remedy, and that evil includes the entire species. The invitations connected with it are wide as the earth and broad as the sea; the promises it proclaims boundless as the necessities of

human kind. "All men"—"whosoever will"—"the world"—"every creature"—"the whole world"—"all the earth"—"every nation"—these are some of the expressions through which inspired truth labors to expend itself in regard to the amplitude of the moral expedient by means of which men *may* be saved.

The first requisite for man's recovery thus provided for—even that he may be assured to a certainty that his past sins may be remitted, and he delivered from their penalty and punishment—the next requisite is, that his disabled and perverted nature should itself be actually recovered and restored. It were not enough to inform us that there was a way in which, so far as law and government are concerned, man *may* be saved: we wish to know if there be any method or any power by which man himself *is* saved, changed, and reformed, in his own nature. Here we find the testimony of Scripture equally explicit, and the dealings of God distinguished by the same infinite generosity and magnanimity. The cross of Christ is not only the wisdom of God, inasmuch as it discloses to us how God may be just, and yet justify them that believe; but it is also the *power* of God unto salvation, inasmuch as it addresses the most potent motives in aid of regenerating man himself—converting his will, and reclaiming his lost affections.

To convince ourselves how excellently the gospel of our Lord is adapted to meet this second necessity, let us recall some of the effects which followed apostacy from God. These were — shame; fear of God; repulsion from God; and an inflexible perversion of will and affection. We seek, then, a curative power by which these maladies of the soul itself may be healed — some panacea by which the moral ailments of our nature may be medicated. In vain is pardon proclaimed to penitence, and remission of sins to faith, if there be no method by which penitence and faith may be awakened, and man himself be lifted out of the depression into which he is fallen, to shine in the restored and brightened image of his Maker.

Let us consider, then, how admirably adapted is the mediation of Jesus Christ to accomplish this indispensable service. The cross of Christ has relations both manward and Godward. While we believe that it was designed to adjust and rectify our relations to the Ruling Power, so that universal clemency may be exercised without detriment, we do not believe that this is the only design and effect of the redemption by the Son of God. We believe it to be God's own power for exciting hope, awakening confidence, enkindling love, and attracting an alienated soul back to faith, loyalty, innocence, and joy.

Let us consider these in their order. *Shame* is the

inseparable shadow of sin. There can be no recovery for man, even though pardon be proclaimed, so long as conscious shame drives him into any attempts to hide himself from his Maker. Confidence destroyed in the soul of man, that confidence toward God must be re-established. What disastrous effects upon the soul itself have been entailed by the shame and distrust which guilt hath engendered! It is a law of our nature that the emotions of the soul give complexion and character to all other beings and objects. Is the spirit within darkened and disturbed, "it makes a turmoil of a quiet world:"—

> "The fiends of his own bosom people air
> With kindred fiends, that hunt him to despair.
> Hates he his fellow? Self he makes the rate
> Of fellow-man, and cries, 'Tis hate for hate!'"

So in regard to God. The soul filled with distrust and shame, God is represented in images of terror. Fear is the ascendant emotion. How terrible God is made to appear to the ashamed and frightened spirit of man, is apparent in all the religions of heathenism, with their vain and frenzied attempts to propitiate offended power. Even in Christian lands, wherever the soul has not received the full light of the glorious gospel of God, it is tortured with the apprehension that we are objects of God's unmingled hatred. A troubled conscience involves an excited imagination,

and both together invest the character of our Maker with forms of gloom and terror. The soul remembers God, and is troubled. It cherishes the belief that God hates us in all we are, and in all we do — in our ploughing and our reaping, in our merchandise and our homes; and, until this progeny of shame be displaced by hope and confidence, never will the stricken nature of man be recovered.

To accomplish this, God lays aside the insignia of his majesty, and approaches man in the form of utmost condescension. Not now does he come down as upon Sinai, riding upon the wings of the wind, and sending forth his lightnings from the angry clouds: he reveals himself in a human form, and mingles among those he would restore in ways of sympathy, in words of tenderness, and in deeds of love. He divests himself of every form and expression of terror by which man would be driven into more of fear and despair, and manifests himself in such a manner, that his creatures may no longer doubt and distrust his love. He has assured them that his love, even for those who have sinned against him, has never wearied and never been exhausted. He has pitied those who never have pitied themselves. Remembering that they were his offspring, made in his image, he has opened his fatherly heart that they might see how deep, how full, how strong, has been his love for them. He has caused to be writ-

ten in this gospel of his grace the parable of the prodigal son, wherein the joyful father—weeping on the neck of his penitent boy, gazing upon his haggard face with ineffable pity, bathing and blessing his sore and broken heart with every expression of love and forgiveness—was designed to represent the feelings of His own infinite nature toward our guilt and shame. Oh, if every ray of hope which that one passage of the New Testament has kindled in the soul of the depressed and the fearful, could be retained and attached to the page where it is written, it would be illuminated so as no page was ever illuminated in gold by man's art; it would shine as if there burned upon its surface the splendor of transfiguration!

These forms of approach, these voices of kindness, enkindle hope; and hope, enkindled, leads man, step by step, to the full assurance that God loves him. Like the dawning of the morning does this belief break upon the long and fearful night of guilt and shame. God actually loves us. He loves us sincerely. Without reserve, without equivocation, in the infinite truthfulness of his magnanimous nature, he loves us. Notwithstanding our sins, he loves us; in spite of our provocations and demerits, he loves us still: he loves us, so as no man ever loved; he loves those who have shown themselves his enemies—loves them unto self-denial—loves them unto suffering—loves them unto death! Now

hope brightens like the morning star; the Sun rises with healing in his wings; confidence takes the place of fear and distrust; love ejecteth fear; and hope, confidence, and love, draw the soul back to God and life.

The power of condescension and kindness in overcoming shame, and exciting hope and confidence, is not all which is essential to the restoration of humanity. Man is to be made loyal and obedient again. That law of his being, and of God's universe, which requires him to love his Maker supremely and all beings most cordially, has never been relaxed; nor, indeed, could it be, without impairing man's own blessedness. Some method there must be, by which humanity, with all its proclivities to evil, with all the stiffness and steadfastness of its own will, shall be reclaimed to a hearty and joyful obedience. No new revelation of mere law could do this, since it is in reference to law that our nature has proved itself defective. No exhibitions of terror could awaken love in a soul where love is already wanting. No stern utterances of authority could do it. No excitements of fear could do it. No revelations of danger could do it. No pressure of necessity and obligation could do it. No explosive volleys of menace and wrath could do it. Had every mountain-top on earth become like Sinai, pealing the voice of the law, amid earthquakes and darkness, "The soul that sinneth, it shall

die!"—this could not do it. If the world in which we live had been filled with all forms and expressions of incensed power—the heavens gathering blackness, flashing thick flames, and the solid earth trembling with convulsive expectation of God's righteous judgment—all this would not do it. The alienated affections of man's soul are never reclaimed by force, nor power, nor obligation, nor anger, nor just displeasure—for they will sullenly adhere to their own objects, even though those objects are known to be unworthy and interdicted.

The method by which God recovers man to obedience is the same by which he overcomes his shame and fear. By the exhibition of his own love to us, he would win our love to him. What law could not accomplish in its naked majesty and its righteous severity, that has been accomplished by other expressions of God's marvellous *love*. We love him because he first loved us. Gratitude becomes more potent than obligation; and the generosity of God awakens affections which never could be summoned into life in the heart of the disobedient by all the might and menaces of authority. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Strong, indeed, are the attractions of the Saviour's mercy. That cross on which the Son of God was raised to the eye of the world, is the central magnet by which the hearts of the ungrateful are to be drawn back to their Maker. It was the self-offering of love. It was

love making the highest, fullest, greatest expression of its own sincerity. Like the hiding of God's power did it seem — as the very darkest of all mysteries — that day when the world's Redeemer hung in mortal agonies on the tree, and the sun hid its face, and the earth shuddered at the expiring groans of her Lord — but there is no hiding of God's love, no veiling of God's intention now, that he who was dead is alive again; and a light brighter than that of the sun shines from the face of him who rose from the tomb of Joseph. A reinforcement is given to our weak and wasted strength when this potency of God's unveiled and unmingled love is applied to help our obedience. Many a man who has braved the terrors of Omnipotence, and defied the wrath of his Maker, has been subdued by this infinite generosity of love. Had he seen only the flaming sword of cherubim brandishing vengeance — had he felt himself pursued by some minister of justice armed with the implements of pain — he would have strengthened himself to contend and to endure; but when Jesus Christ comes toward him with tenderness of compassion, with smiles of benignity, nay, even with tears of sympathy; when he brings the gift of life in that hand which bears the print of the nail, and proclaims all which is good and gracious with that voice whose death-sigh convulsed the earth — enmity is slain, the hard heart is dissolved, and the penitent falls at the feet of mercy, kissing them

in gratitude, and bathing them with the tears of a subdued and loving spirit.

Nor is even this all which our Redeemer has accomplished for the restoration of the soul itself. By assuming our own nature he has convinced us of its capacities, and furnished us with a model. It is here that the example of the Son of God exerts its intended power. Because we can not admit that the mere living and teaching of Jesus Christ were all the help which he imparted to our race, let us not overlook the real help and advantage which his living example was designed to afford. That perfection of his personal life, which by itself could only reprove and condemn us by a painful contrast, becomes a positive joy now that it is associated with the consolations of pardon and the promises of assistance. He entered into the very life of man. He took upon himself the nature not of angels, but of those whom he would redeem. He presented in his own living form an idea of what man was designed to be, and what again he will be, when restored and perfected. The lawgiver has furnished in his own human life, the complete fulfilment of his own law. He was a child—he was a son—he was a mechanic—he was a citizen—he was a sufferer—he was a man. At every point, save one, he conjoined himself to our nature in completest sympathy. His immaculate purity entered into no fellowship with *sin;* but into every infirmity and depression of our race

he descended with an actual and living experience. He was poor, yet he exhibited cheerfulness: he was subject to parents, that he might show us the beauty of filial respect and love; his hand was addicted to honest work, that he might teach us happy industry; a man of prayer was he, that he might excite us to habits of devotion: he was reviled, and was meek; wronged, and was patient; insulted, and answered not; persecuted, and was forgiving; put to death, and prayed for his murderers. In all points did he become like unto us in condition and circumstances, that we might be helped to become like him in feeling and conduct. His own feet have trodden the path in which he would have us to go. The possibilities and futurities of our nature are exhibited in his own actual life.

Nor must we think of this sympathy as confined to the few years "when his blessed feet walked the acres of Palestine." There is reason to fear that we accustom ourselves to think of this our Restorer only as he *was*, and not rather as he *is*. We have seen him lying beneath the trees of Gethsemane; but that form is not there to-day. Let us not endeavor to conceive of him only as when wrapped in the winding-sheet of linen, in the sepulchre of the garden. Neither let us delude ourselves with the idea that he was a personage of a past and remote history only. He who was dead is alive for evermore. Our Redeemer lives — lives not only

in the manifested glories of heaven, amid incense and praises and worship, he lives among us still—in us, and with us. He is our living, active, and sympathizing helper to-day. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "I go away, but I will come again. For a season I go where your sense of sight can not follow, but I will return—help you, and comfort you—in ways which neither sense nor unbelief can discover." *The Comforter shall come and abide in you.* Now, indeed, we seem to be mounting to the climax of a Saviour's mercy. His expiation for our sins prepared the way for our forgiveness: his love conquered our shame and attracts our obedience: his example presents our model: his sympathy cheers us with encouragement: and his promised Spirit proves the Comforter of the world, by illuminating our darkness, strengthening our weakness, persuading our reluctance, inspiring our languor, enkindling our life, and so by all these varied means and methods we are lifted up out of depression into hope, and gladness, and immortality.

Nor is all this merely a *theory* of religion. The redemption of our Lord has actually proved itself equal to all its promises. Christ returned not to the skies unattended by the trophies of his success. That penitent malefactor who was crucified at his side went with

him to the Paradise of God—a proof and a pledge of his power to save. Ever since a long procession of redeemed men have been entering in through the gates into the city, and more will follow in numbers like unto drops of the morning dew, till at last unbelief is in the minority, the race is restored, and Christ, seeing of the travail of his soul, shall be satisfied.

It remains yet to be considered what this redemption has already accomplished; to what degree it has mitigated the woes of the world; what changes it has wrought; what prospects are dawning now upon our race; and what is that future state wherein the restoration of man is complete.

Having visited Eden and Gethsemane, we must also visit that second Paradise where the redeemed shall walk in glory. But before we treat of that resurrection which is at the last, when death and the grave are abolished for ever, let us remember that there is another kind of resurrection which is needful now—a spiritual resurrection from a spiritual death—for the time *now is* —when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live! Now is the time for us to make sure of that ultimate rising with Christ to his throne, by rising with him in the regeneration. He who stood at the grave of Bethany, with mingled tears and power, the sympathy of a bereaved man and the might of omnipotence, and said, "Lazarus, come forth," approaches us now,

in sabbath ordinances and privileges—in the records of his love and the voices of his truth—bidding us awake, arise, and live. As the whole body of the sea is swayed by the attractions of the heavenly orb, let us yield to the redemption of Christ and be lifted up by the power of his love who came to help, restore, and save.

VIII.

"TIMES OF RESTITUTION."

Let us look at life as it is. Here we are in an actual world. Beneath these overarching skies, now one expanse of cloudless blue, now darkened with gloom, and now piled up with vapor of gorgeous white — with sunrising and sunsetting — with stars in their order and brilliancy — spring, summer, autumn, and winter; — a world wherein are births, baptisms, and deaths, young children and old men, cradles and graves — a world wherein are homes and warehouses, selling and buying, farming and commerce, governments and law, penitentiaries and gibbets, sickness and health, wrongs and charities, outrages and mercies, pleasures and woes, laughter and groans, riches and poverty, honor and shame, war and peace, good men and bad men, and many which you know not how to call and classify them — the good who are not all good, and the bad

who are not bad altogether — men of all pursuits — laborers and scholars, merchants, lawyers, physicians, preachers, and all having enough of varied work to do — an actual world it is, with fields, and skies, and water — with railroads, manufactories, ships, school-houses, and churches — with six days for working, and one day for resting and rejoicing: such is the veritable scene where we awake to consciousness, and where we are now passing our own existence. Here is something at the farthest remove from theory. Here is an actual state of things, with which we are brought into direct contact.

How, now, does our *theory* of Christianity correspond to such a world as this? How do the truths of the New-Testament revelation apply to the facts with which we are conversant? And how are we, in this our personal life, and in this actual world, to avail ourselves of the promised benefits of redemption?

How would you describe this world in which we live, and this life through which we are passing? Surely not as a world of unmingled blessedness. You gaze upon one of those bright orbs in the evening sky, and, without any certain knowledge whether it is inhabited or not, you imagine it to be the abode of an order of beings never yet cursed and corrupted by sin; you listen in the still night, as if you almost hoped to catch

some strain of music floating down to assure you that there were worlds of unmixed purity and joy. Without exercising your fancy at all, you know, for an assured certainty, that there is one world in which is no element of evil. Sin is not there. Sorrow is not there. There is no tear in any eye. There is no sickness. Neither is there any death. It is the central palace of the Great King—the home of holiness, of love, of joy unspeakable, and glory unclouded.

Surely *this* world is not like *that*. When your eye turned from gazing upon that world above, it fell on a poor cripple, a beggar clad in rags, a pale-faced and weeping child, a lonely, haggard widow; it fell on a yard full of graves. Your ear, when it wearied with waiting to catch some song from the azure sky, was assailed with oaths and blasphemy, with the groaning of the prisoner, the cry of the oppressed, and the moan of the dying. Surely, surely, this is not heaven. Neither is it such a world as we should imagine it would have been if it had retained the original character it had when it came from the hand of its rejoicing Maker, uninvaded by evil. Dogmas apart, theologies apart, revelation itself apart, surely this world in which we live is not as bright and blessed as it might be.

Imagine, again, a world in which there is no joy, and no goodness, and no hope. Let it be filled with beings self-abandoned to all wicked courses; addicted to evil

under no restraint; furnished with bodies which can stand the recoil of sinful practices; in which there is no obstruction to wicked passion, shame foaming out itself, and malignity flaming up its own wrath. There is a world of which the Son of God himself has spoken, as prepared for the devil and his angels. It is a world of outer darkness, of weeping and wailing, of remorse and of despair—a prison with gloomy apparatus of wo—with chains, and waitings for the judgment of the great day—with smoke of torment, the quenchless flame, the deathless worm, and no hope!

Neither is *this* world, where we now are, like unto *that*. Here is the bright sun, and the flowers of the field, and the gladness of the sky; here are liberty, and hope, and pleasure; here are good men and good deeds, household worship, laughing children, sabbath hymns, and temples of God where we meet to pray and to adore; here are all manner of kindly affections, and pleasant pursuits, and joyful hopes. Surely this world is not like *hell;* it is not an Aceldama—a field of blood; nor a Golgotha—the place of dead men's bones, and nothing beside.

How, then, shall we describe this world of our habitation, and how interpret the scene of our earthly existence? Precisely in correspondence with the great facts and truths of the Christian religion. It is another of those unbribed testimonies to the truth of the Christian

faith, that its written statements are the exact counterpart of the actual facts which are round about us. This world is not all goodness, neither is it all evil; it is not a world where goodness is perfected, neither one where evil is unmodified and unrestrained: it is a world which sin has stricken, and which mercy is now reclaiming. IT IS A FALLEN, BLIGHTED WORLD, IN THE VERY PROCESS OF RESTITUTION. The doctrine of Christianity alone unlocks this mystery of life, by an adequate explanation. The wards of the lock and the structure of the key correspond precisely. Things answer to theory; facts fit unto doctrines. The written word affirms that man has fallen—humanity deteriorated; that sin and death are in the world, but that God purposes to redeem and to restore; that there is hope for the fallen, help for the guilty, life for the dead. And, turning from the inspired page to this actual world, we meet the echo of the same truth, the veritable spectacle of the same reality—a fallen world in the course of recovery; apostate man on an *ascending grade, under the auspices of hope and mercy.*

If this world be not like to the temple of God and the Lamb, or to our Father's house in heaven with its many mansions, it is a Bethesda, with a great number of blind, and sick, and impotent folk, lying about in its many porches—yet not without hope, for the Son of God is among them, asking them whether they would

be made whole, and bidding them rise up and walk. Many resemblances, indeed, has this world to an immense hospital, wherein, if there be many signs and proofs of accidents, fractures, wounds, and diseases, there are also the most skilful of surgeons, the most potent of remedies, the most tender of nursing, where even the sick and the wretched smile and are glad under the shelter of kindness.

We have opened the Scriptures, and read what God promised from the beginning he would do; and what he actually has done in sending his Son Jesus Christ to declare his love, and turn us away from our iniquities. We have endeavored to show wherein this act of Jesus Christ was adapted to accomplish the results at which it aimed; how it avails to rectify our relations to violated law, and what power there is in it to change and control the will and affections of men. This is what you may call the theory, the *rationale*, of Christianity. And now we ask you to observe how exactly the facts of this very world in which we live, and through which we are passing, correspond to this representation.

Conceive what this world would have been, long ere this, if it had been abandoned of God to the practice and penalties of sin. If the machine could have lasted so long—if the world had not been consumed in the fires of its own kindling—what the spectacle it would present of a race deteriorated and deteriorating, with

no power or prospect of self-recovery — inflamed, exasperated, sullen, despairing, self-abandoned to sin unchecked and unrestrained! Conceive what this world would be if every act of sin received its just recompense of reward, and punishment, in every instance, followed hard after transgression! Such is not the correct description of our world. Sin is here, but it is sin under restraint — sin with the promise of forgiveness and restoration. The heavens have received again the form of Him who has been preached unto us as the Promised One, and there he abides until the restitution of all things — a restitution now in progress, through the forbearance of God. So it has been appointed in his wisdom that this curative process should be gradual. Instead of being accomplished by his instantaneous omnipotence, he has instituted methods instrumental and subsidiary, the successful development of which may consume centuries of time.

Observe, then, the long-suffering of God. He is not slack concerning his word; he is not insensible to the evil of sin; he is not indifferent to the crimes of the world; but he *is* patient and full of forbearance. This world is not governed on the principle of just retribution, immediately administered, for all sin. Penalties, retributions of certain kinds and degrees, indeed exist; and these are necessary to keep sin within limits, and under restraint. But it is plain enough that this world's

affairs are not conducted on the principle of a full and immediate punishment for all iniquity. Many of those methods employed of God under an earlier system of law, when as yet the redemption of man was but partially revealed—methods which partook of the character of severity and of judgment—are now stayed and withdrawn in these days of God's waiting and long-suffering. Many are they who defy the law of their Maker, and trample it beneath their feet. But the heavens do not gather blackness, and dart the bolts of God upon the head of the guilty. The swift ministers of divine justice do not arrest them. The earth does not open to swallow them up. Instead thereof, the rain falleth gently on the just and the unjust; the sun shineth on the evil and on the good; the boldest atheist enjoys the largest liberty; his fields are not given up to blasting and mildew; God's dew and showers fall upon them, and they yield their increase; God's winds waft his ships from sea to sea, and God's rivers turn his mill-wheels and water his meadows; God gives him health, and home, and comforts innumerable, for God is patient, and these are the days wherein God would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

In a word, the state of things in this world is precisely such as we should expect it to be, in accordance with the revealed facts and doctrines of the New Tes-

tament. Affairs move on under the forbearance and tender mercy of that God who would restore and save. Time goes on without a jar or convulsion; days, weeks, months, years, follow one another in serene procession; man goeth forth to work, and returneth to his rest; he lieth down, and his sleep is sweet; for everything there is a season; there is a time to be born, a time to plant, a time to travel, and a time for all life's multifarious pursuits: for God is not punishing and destroying, but sparing, and waiting, and restoring, gradually lifting up the world to the ultimate and complete restitution of all things. Woes, sorrows, indeed are here; but these are not alone or unmingled. These do not complete the description of our world. What forms of beauty, what expressions of goodness, what favors of Providence, are multiplied around us! Light is sown for our gladness; fruits, beyond all necessity, are afforded for our pleasure; flowers, surpassing the glory of kings, are strewn along our path; the birds warble their songs of innocence; the bow of God arches the sky with its glorious tints; and earth, and sea, and the heavens, are crowded with all forms of kindness, of love, and of delight. A sabbath in the spring—the "bridal of the earth and sky"—when all the recollections of early life come back in images of stillness, brightness, and beauty, proclaims even to the deafness of infidelity, 'Verily, God has not abandoned

the world, but he loves it still, and is guiding it on to the restitution of all things.'

The fact is, the world is actually rising up out of the waters of the deluge. The human race is on an ascending scale. The prospects of the world are brighter than they ever were before. Those parts of the globe which have been upheaved into the light, are clothed with verdure such as never has been seen since the freshness of Eden. The curse has been lifted up and lifted off till it is scarcely felt. The curse of sweating, drudging, depressing labor, has been mitigated and exchanged for the blessing of cheerful and self-rewarding work. There is more of activity in the world: more of industry, more of intelligence, more of thrift, more of hope, more of liberty, and more of enjoyment. Eyeless and atheistic philosophy reasons and speculates as to the cause and occasion of this: but there is only one cause and explanation. God has undertaken the world's restoration — the times of refreshing have come from his presence — He who made the world has reprieved it — He who reprieves has redeemed it — He who has redeemed has promised a complete restitution.

The salvation of man begins here, and is consummated hereafter. Associate not that word only with the joys and rewards of a future Paradise. Send not your thoughts away beyond the judgment — think not only

of the white throne — and the welcomed ones on the right hand of the judge — of the city and the kingdom of God. Salvation has its commencement here — its completion there. The gospel saves men now. It has changed the aspect and prospect of the world already. Many, indeed, share in the general benefits conveyed by the work of Christ passively and involuntarily, who have no other lot or part in his kingdom. There is not a merchant, or mechanic, or farmer, in Christendom, not a man, nor a child, who is not enjoying a thousand advantages proceeding directly from the gospel of our Lord; and this none the less because they think not of the cause to which they are indebted. Humanity may be recovered out of many of the ills into which it would be crowded and depressed by the weight and gravitation of unrestrained iniquity, without reaching that highest restitution of all, which consists in the likeness and communion of God. Nevertheless, this latter attainment is never secured without comprehending and involving all preceding benefits. One may be upborne into many mercies, along with the world to which he belongs, rising and rising as it does by the leverage of redeeming love, whose own soul may never share in the spiritual restoration which is through Jesus Christ. But faith in the Redeemer is sure to give man elevation in this present life which nothing beside can ever promise.

This is done by the surest and simplest of all methods. It is through the gospel that man learns the value of his own existence. Glimpses of that he obtains when he reads that he was fashioned by the hand of God—that the inspiration of the Almighty gave him life—when he studies the wonders of his own frame and spirit: but it is only in the act of the Redeemer's condescension, suffering, and death, that man learns the true worth and importance of his own being. In this one conviction behold the seed of all growth—the beginning of all advancement. Never will that man throw himself away, by indulging in practices which ruin, who has been taught aright, what the Son of God endured for his redemption, acquiring thus a new estimate of his own nature and being. Here is a power which tends to man's uplifting in all things. The mind grows with such a perception, and intelligence and knowledge are the fruit. The health of the body is promoted by it also; for sin entails infirmities, diseases, and death, upon the physical frame. Industry is born of it; for man's work is animated by hope and cheerfulness. His worldly estate is benefited thereby, since everything pertaining to his life and person has a new importance. Freedom, enterprise, energy, whatever is good and valuable, proceed from this conviction of God's love for man; and the race is sure to improve, and the world to brighten, under such a resto-

rative principle. Slowly, surely, certainly, our common humanity is rising under the power of that gospel which promises for the future complete and universal restitution.

Our personal life is briefer, by far, than the life of the species. The world continues, but our days upon the earth are few. Many centuries may revolve before the world is completely restored; but the question of our individual salvation is to be decided within a narrower space of time. In this matter we must separate ourselves as individuals from the general life of our race, and consider well the nature of the probation upon which we are now passing our earthly existence.

In the course of these consecutive topics, we have made frequent use of the expression, *the first and the second probation of human nature*—the first having regard to simple obedience to law; the second to the prescribed method of relief and restoration. We can not be too familiar with this distinction. It is this which makes and marks the difference between man in Eden and man in apostacy. Involved in all the liabilities and woes of the fall, the question proposed to us, in reference to which our personal life is passing, relates to the treatment of proffered help and a provided redemption. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Wilt thou be saved? This is the question which describes the terms of our moral probation. Shall we be partakers

of this great restitution, and share in all the benefits dispensed by the Son of God?

Let us observe how our actual life corresponds to this inspired representation. Surely the tender mercy of God has visited us, for life is prolonged, that we may have space for repentance. The substance of the gospel revelation is—'Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, seeing that the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord have already come.'

Everything appears to be arranged and conducted, in the providence of God, on the principle of presenting this question to our minds most auspiciously. The terms of probation are well defined in a written revelation. There is no vagueness in their expression. That these terms should not pass from the mind, God has appointed that there should be a frequent declaration of them by the human voice. He actually *sends* the offer of pardon, and the invitations of his love, unto the children of men. He intends his gospel to be preached. He would have it heralded everywhere. He has purposed that there should be a class of men whose very life and object it shall be to proclaim unto their fellow-men the long-suffering and tender mercy of God, and beseech them to turn and live. That this might not be crowded or drowned out of the minds of men by the cares of life, a whole day of the week, the seventh part of

human life, is set apart for the express purpose of keeping alive in the soul of man the conviction of life's great object and end.

Our salvation is not to be deferred to a distant judgment and a distant heaven. God would save us here, and save us now. He would inspire us with hope, bless us with peace, and anoint us with gladness. He would bring our humanity under his curative and restorative power. He has actually accomplished this in regard to many. We are conversant with facts all around us which correspond exactly with the Christian theory and doctrine. We see and know the men who are actually resuscitated, and in process of being restored. They are not perfect. They are not holy as man was in Eden. They are not like the angels. They are men —heirs of all the ills to which our nature is subject; they have sinned; they have wept; but they have begun to hope, and begun to live. The diseased eye has been medicated, the deaf ear has been opened, the fractured limb been reduced, the broken heart bound up, and salvation has begun. It will be carried on unto perfection. That which is converted will be sanctified; that which is sanctified now in part, will be sanctified wholly, and glorified in the "restitution of all things."

Just this is what God requires and waits for in every one of us. We must begin with repentance and con-

version, that we may go on to restoration and glory. He would have us yield ourselves to the Great Physician of the soul, that we may be healed. That process of healing may be long; oftentimes we may doubt whether it is advancing at all; but we may be sure, if we commit ourselves by faith to the promised helper and restorer of man, he will not leave his work unfinished. There is no promise of exemption from all sorrow. Affliction will come; tribulation will come; old age will come; sickness will come; and death will not tarry. Nevertheless, the believer may hope; he may be at peace; he may be of good cheer, for his salvation is begun. Graves are all around him; but he has been taught, what Nature never could teach, to think of the dead without weeping — to hope and to smile in the very path and presence of Death. Mysteries are about him, but the light breaks through the riven cloud. The larger part of the human race die in infancy. Very little is said concerning such — this great mystery of Providence — in the Old Testament. What light gleams upon it in the New — now that we read of the infancy of Jesus — of the martyrdom of the babes of Bethlehem — of Christ taking little children into his arms, and pronouncing them of the kingdom of heaven; now that we read of redemption in its glorious extent and fullness! What gladness shines in upon the mystery, as we follow the majority of those born into the world,

for number like the blossoms of the spring, in their early rescue and their glorious translation! We actually live in a world where light shines on the very spot the name of which has been changed from *sepulchre* to *cemetery*, the sleeping-place of the redeemed. That little grave, among trees and flowers, which seems greener and more beautiful than any spot beside—which the hand of a bereaved parentage loves to smooth and adorn, and the heart visits so often—is not the cold, and cheerless, and dreaded place it would have been had we not heard of Christ. Hope haloes the head of the sleeping child; it is rescued—it is saved. Who would frustrate the Saviour's purpose? who would forbid him to encircle the lambs in his arms, and gather them to his bosom?

Let redemption have its sway and success. The very graves preach to us salvation. All things conspire to teach us this grand drift and tenor of God's purposes. The sun shines, as if it would say, "God is good and gracious, and would have you to be saved." Life is prolonged, and echoes the same gospel. Business uninterrupted—this going forth to buy and to gain—declares that God is long-suffering. The sabbath returns, and proclaims aloud the very terms and conditions of our probation—"Be converted, be saved!" We open the Scriptures, and they say to us on every page: "Repent! these are days of mercy; believe, and be saved."

The ocean-current — the winds and the waves — all set thitherward. We might almost see, in these days of restitution, God's hand beckoning us from the skies, as we do hear his voice, saying, "Come, come and live." Nothing, absolutely nothing, do we see designed to discourage or to destroy us; everything is arranged to hold before us this one critical question of our second and last probation: Will we believe in the Redeemer, and be saved?

The *last* probation, did we say? Is not this the scripture statement? Is any other probation necessary? Is not this sufficient? May we not be saved now? What other question can be proposed to us hereafter than this? What other trial is needed than this very one, whether we will be redeemed and restored? If this terminates disastrously, through our unbelief and folly, what other measure of relief can we conceive of?

What remaineth for such as reject a *Saviour?* If one spurns the remedy, if one defeats redemption, if one rejects the pardon, if one will not be saved by that miraculous method which is interposed to break the natural and constituted connection between sin and suffering, guilt and punishment, what hope of deliverance can there be? If the gospel be hid, if the blood of the Son of God be despised, if the Redeemer be scorned and slighted, what remaineth, but a certain looking for of judgment? Sin unforgiven, penalties unremitted,

punishments unrestrained, must have their straight, changeless, and eternal course. How can we escape if we neglect the great salvation? How can we stay the worlds in their course, or stop the march of unchangeable realities? What shall the end be of those who obey not the gospel?

Let us hear the word again. The Redeemer has ascended to the skies. The times of refreshing have come. The world waits its final and complete restitution: "REPENT YE, THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT."

IX.

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION.

In treating of the method of man's redemption and restoration, we have had to deal with the miracles of God's compassion and love. We have rehearsed his own promises to forgive, forgive freely, and forgive unto the uttermost. We read in the gospel that it is his good pleasure to pardon, help, and save, all who will avail themselves of his infinite mercy. A grateful theme is this on which to dwell and descant.

But these are not the *only facts* pertaining to man's recovery and God's administration. We have seen how the mediation of Jesus Christ has rectified our relations to moral government, so that the exercise of the pardoning power may not be impeded. We have seen that the mediation of Jesus Christ, as an expression of God's love, is adapted to awaken gratitude and love in the soul of man. Admitting all this, we are told that there are other facts in man's history — facts of Nature,

laws of Nature, if you will — which demand our notice, and which, in some manner, must be disposed of before the recovery of man can be regarded as a possibility.

We are told of that law of retribution which is inwrought with our natural constitution: not of a law whose penalties may be inflicted or remitted *arbitrarily* at the mere pleasure of the Ruling Power — but penalties which are inseparable from our own bodies and souls — the results of laws which are as undeviating as those which guide and govern the planets. We can conceive, it is said, how the Most High, in the exercise of his mere mercy, can remit some forms of punishment which he has seen fit to connect with the violation of his moral law; but how can he arrest the operation of those natural laws which connect pain and suffering with evil courses, without breaking in upon and breaking up that constitution of the universe which he has created and ordained to be fixed and immutable?

All will agree that this is a topic of no ordinary interest or importance. We would not overlook nor slight it. We must comprehend it, before we can justify the scriptural theory of conversion — that inspired direction which requires the wicked man to forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, promising them exemption from all the consequences of previous transgression.

Let us, then, before we proceed to treat of that ultimate perfection which awaits man's complete restoration in a future life, pause a while and consider well the nature and operation of the *great law of retribution.* Justice to the theme itself requires that we should state the law in all its length and breadth. Afterward, we will endeavor to show in what manner the law of mercy is made to agree with the law of retribution.

The word *retribution*, as its etymology shows, signifies a *paying back*, and evidently intends those consequences which are the results and rewards of evil actions. It is briefly but strongly expressed in scriptural language: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. What a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Differences of opinion may exist among men as to the nature of retribution—its extent, its strictness, its severity, and its continuance; but it would not be easy to find a man who will deny the existence of retribution altogether. He may be skeptical as to the *regularity* with which this retributive law may operate, but he must forswear the use and evidence of his own senses before he can question the reality of some form of retribution in this present life. Here is something which does not depend upon the philological interpretation of the Scriptures. Here is something beyond the use and import of any one word, Hebrew,

Greek, or English. We refer, just now, to *facts*, and not *theories*—facts which are as palpable to the profanest of infidels as to the most devout of believers—facts which the Scriptures do not originate, and which would be no less real if the Scriptures never had been written.

One of the first facts with which we come into contact in this world is governing power; and the power which governs is retributive power—the power which *treats* in accordance as it is itself *treated*. No one has an unrelated or independent existence. A child is not destined to live in this world free from all moral responsibility, as a flower, or the flower-shaped insect which flutters over it. There is a power above it, and around it, which controls it—governs it; and to that power it must yield obedience, or suffer. Parental authority is not a product of revelation, although revelation recognises, sanctions, and instructs it. It is a fact which the God of Nature has established prior to and independent of the disclosures of Christianity. There is no part of the earth—no tribe nor clan, civilized or barbarous, Christian or pagan—where the human infant does not pass under parental government; the only difference being that, where Christianity prevails, government is less capricious, less cruel, and more rational and more benign. No sooner do the lungs begin to play, and the limbs to move, and the intelligence to

open, than a child finds itself in the presence of a power which it can not resist *with impunity*. Disobey that power, and retribution, more or less emphatic, more or less equitable, is the consequence. Resist that authority, and childhood deprives itself of parental favor and confidence, to say the least, if it does not subject itself to a concussion more violent and painful. This governing power is a law of Nature. Nor is there any escape from it for one born of the human race.

Imagine that one breaks away from the restraints of his own parentage, and will not brook them at all. Can he flee from the presence of law, and the power of retribution? He may dream of exemption from all restraint. Think you he can ever find it? He goes to sea, as many a wayward youth has done, in anticipation of an illusive freedom. He has changed the *form*, not the *reality*, of the governing and retributive power. It is less patient, less tolerant, less gentle, of necessity far more emphatic and decided, than that from which he flees; and, let him presume to resist the power which rules the ship, and a rope's end or iron handcuff will soon convince him that he has not escaped the presence or the power of retribution.

Dreams he still of a perfect liberty, laughing and scoffing at all laws to gain it? Behold him, then, on the deck of the bloodiest pirate which ever prowled on the windward station! He calls himself an *outlaw;*

but is he beyond and above all law? Where is that dreaded, hated thing, *law*, so rigorous, so inexorable, so merciless, as among men so atrociously wicked, that they have no confidence in one another, and so, by the instinct of self-preservation, are compelled to protect themselves by a common principle and law of *fear*. Let that wayward, reckless man, who has imagined that he could disfranchise himself from all restraint, and find a boundless liberty for his own will, but lift his hand against the power which rules the crew of the buccaneer, and, if he prove not the stronger, in five minutes he will swing from the yard-arm, or walk the plank!

Or has he deceived himself with dreamy notions of absolute freedom on the islands of the sea, remote from the laws of civilization, where Nature recognises no law but appetite? Legislation, enlightened, rational, and benignant, there may not be; but power—governing power, of some description—there is; and let him, in his fancy of unrestrained indulgence, bring its suspicions upon himself, its jealousy or its hate, and secret poison, the war-club, or the bowstring, will soon prove to him, though he dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, that he can not flee from the presence of retributive power.

We can dispense, just now, with *all speculations* concerning the origin and prerogatives of human government. We are concerned with the *fact*, for such it is,

that there never was a form of society, a time, or a place, where the presence of a governing power — and a power which governs always implies a power which repays and rewards — of some description, was not felt, either patriarchal, hereditary, assumed, or delegated; and so universal is this fact, that it must be regarded as a *law of Nature*. Modify the governing power as you will; disorganize society and reorganize it as you may; experiment upon *this* form and upon *that* — men must have their laws, and he who infringes them must deprive himself of all the advantages they were designed to secure. The Christian religion has its own doctrine, its instructions, and its laws, in relation to government of all kinds, parental and political; but it does not originate the necessity or the fact of some ruling power, which would remain immutable if every copy of the New Testament were consumed from the earth. These are facts and laws of Nature.

Passing from these visible forms and expressions of governing power, there are other forms of retribution which are entirely and absolutely independent of all human agency. There are retributive laws which are altogether irrespective of human legislation. There are laws of nature, and there are laws of God, which are altogether distinct from the written code. They are written on the fleshly tables of the heart; in the articulation of the joints; in the fibre of the flesh; in

the marrow of the bones; in the meshes of the brain; in the life of the nerves; all over and all through this wonderful mechanism of the body and the soul. These are not to be relaxed or mitigated by any mere impulse of mercy. They are fixed and changeless ordinances of God.

Conceive of a man exiled upon another Juan Fernandez, some uninhabited island, where is neither father, nor chief, nor king, nor sheik, nor ruler of any name, nor law in any of its representatives, nor society in any of its restraints, where there is no priest, no preacher, no Bible, no public sentiment—is there no law of retribution which reigns invisibly but strictly over the silence of the seas? Let that solitary man indulge his appetites to an immoderate excess—gorge himself with food, stimulate and drown his every sense with intoxicating drink—let him do it day by day, in mad defiance of reason and experience. Is there no retribution there? The languor, the pains, the diseases which ensue, are these mere accidents? The fever which boils his blood, the delirium which whirls his brain, the agonies which rack his joints, the sleeplessness which holds open his aching eye, the apoplexy which terminates his life—are these matters of chance, or do they not betray the presence of a retributive law which extends alike over solitude and society? We will not rehearse at this point the enactments recorded in God's

statute-book; nor will we yet insist upon those declarations of the written volume which connect sinning and suffering by an eternal decree; but if any one is inclined to deny the fact of retribution, let him take his theory and go out into the world and subject it to an actual test. To make the experiment satisfactory to the last degree, let him be sure to abstain from all acts which will bring him into collision with, or under the suspicion of, human authority. Let him trespass on no man's property; defraud no man in trade; libel no man's character; commit no violence; make no breach of the peace. As a member of society, be honest; but as a *man*, under the cover of absolute secrecy, indulge every appetency and propensity to the "top of his bent." Think you he will not learn that there is another statute-book besides that which was written with pen and paper?

Is there no retribution besides that which is symbolized in juries and jailors, fines and imprisonments? When Alexander the Great plunged in violent heat into the cold waters of the Cydnus, did not the illness which ensued inform the monarch that there are laws of nature which not even a king may violate with impunity? When the same impetuous man abandoned himself to debauchery within the walls of Babylon, and death was induced as a consequence, did not the result proclaim that there are certainties of nature more in-

vincible and immovable than the far-famed ramparts of the city where he died? Some of the political treatises of Thomas Paine, in point of wholesome thought, sound argument, felicitous manner, and vigorous style, are of signal merit; but when their author abandoned himself to the most sensual indulgencies, wallowing in intemperance and licentiousness, though no political enactment could arrest him, and no law of the state could punish him, there was a stricter, juster law of divine retribution in that bloated face, those uncertain steps, that indistinct articulation, that entailment of disease, that general disgust and degradation of life, which repelled men from his society, making his former associates to flee from his company, and which denied his swollen and loathsome corpse a decent burial in a Christian graveyard. Had not his iniquity taken him, and was he not holden with the cords of his own sins?

Carry this theory of no retribution to a city hospital, and ask the intelligent physicians and surgeons who preside over its crowded wards what is their opinion concerning the existence and inflexible character of natural penalties. See that man writhing in agony. He can not suppress his frightful shrieks. Nurses would soothe him, surgeons would give him all the relief in their power. But there are penalties which can be mitigated by no skill or medication of man.

There are consequences of sin which mercy may deplore but can not remedy. Prayer does not arrest the march of those eternal laws which connect indissolubly transgression and pain. There is a power which holds that sufferer to his bed of anguish which no might of man can resist. It is not man, but God himself, by the ordinances of nature, who binds that evil-doer to the rack of torture. The sinner may repent—he may pray—he may reproach himself—his own mother may kiss him, and the minister of religion may repeat the promises of God relative to forgiveness—but how shall he escape, by any repentance, by any means, from those established and ordained penalties which at length have got hold of him, with a grip and a grasp which nothing can relax. Over that wretched pallet where the victim of a dissolute life struggles with death, you read, as if written with a finger of fire, that old inscription which flames out from the Hebrew Scripture: "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down in the dust with him."

If the law of retribution be so tremendous in its nature, compacted into the very structure of the human body—the very joints and marrow; if it be so inexorable in its character, and so sweeping and inevitable in its power; if the connection between sowing and reaping is in the nature of things so indissoluble; what place is there for the operation of mercy, what hope of

relief, even in the tender compassions and proffered forgiveness of the gospel? This is a question which demands a solution in connection with every theory of man's restoration.

Before we enter upon a reply, we wish to give a still fuller statement of this retributive law. Convinced that there are penalties which overtake the workers of iniquity, and this with a certainty and a steadiness which might blanch the cheek of fear; that this law begins its operations with our intelligent existence, so that the boy on the play-ground who, in the snapping of his marbles, or management of his games, practises fraud and meanness, loses the confidence of his mates, and is marked by them with a suspicion and dislike which may follow him through life; so that the man who plays the part of duplicity and deceit, if he does not come in collision with authority, certainly deprives himself of respect, and honor, so as to blast his good name for ever; while the man who transgresses one of nature's laws—which are God's laws and ordinances—is sure to have visited upon his own health, and body, and mind, the consequences of his irregularity; while this is so obviously and undeniably, it is next to be observed that this law of retribution, at the first, is necessarily unequal in its operation—all sin is not rewarded immediately and visibly; that many of its penalties are delayed and removed

for the present — but that the law itself is not arrested — when it passes beyond our sight — it keeps on and on in its jurisdiction, and its fullest and highest revelation is to be made in the judgment of the great day.

Wishing and intending to lay down yet more fully the facts pertaining to retributive dispensation, we observe there are many crimes, and those of the most atrocious character, which are not and can not be visited with retribution in this present life. That kind and degree of retribution which by various agencies God dispenses in this world, was never intended to be the act and expression of perfect justice, but only such a measure thereof as is necessary for the continuance of this present economy — restraint and penalty sufficient to keep the mechanism from absolute explosion and destruction. Human governments take cognizance only of those acts which threaten the objects for which human governments are administered, while other acts a thousandfold more culpable are of necessity referred to another, a future, and a higher tribunal. A single illustration will convey the distinction.

A stranger alights in the city, and is imposed upon by a dishonest hackman, or a mock-auctioneer, or the skilful adept in slight of hand; complaint is made, and the offender is arrested and brought under retributive notice. A citizen who has amassed a fortune, with a miserly heart suffers his own sister to pine in the

solitude of friendless penury, her life dying away, night and day in keenest suffering; or his own father and mother, aged and infirm, are subject to neglect, and ingratitude, and taunts, and contempt, which eat into their heart like canker; and there is no tribunal beneath the sun which can arraign and punish that act of filial baseness. Why is this? Surely not because the latter act is less criminal than the petty infringement of municipal enactments. But the one act comes within the province of the police, and the other does not. The one act is of that description which municipal governments are compelled to notice for their own existence and protection, and the other is not.

The crime of the apostate Judas was not of that description which brought it under the cognizance of the civil law. But a man who should trespass on his neighbor's vineyard, or suffer an ox that gored with his horns to go at large, was exposed immediately to judicial attention. Why? Was the latter act more criminal than the former? To affirm this would outrage all the reason and instinct of the human race. To protect the property and lives of man is the proper province of civil government; but the breach of friendship, the violation of confidence, the mean lust for money, are crimes, however detestable, which must be referred to some other and higher tribunal.

Will it be maintained that even these crimes of ingratitude, treachery, meanness, falsehood, which can not come under the justice of municipal magistracy, do nevertheless meet with their just recompense of reward, and that in this present life, so that there is no need of a future adjudication? Are not those who perpetrate them the objects of universal scorn and detestation? Are they not ostracized out of decent society? Are they not punished to the uttermost by the loss of that respect and confidence which otherwise they would have enjoyed? This implies that such instances of fraud and unkindness are not secret, but known to the world in their true quality and demerit; which is not in accordance with truth. There is also another fact which comes into view in this connection.

The effect of crime is to diminish sensibility to crime; so that as guilt increases, in that proportion conscience becomes obtuse, and pain and remorse are lessened. Shame, mortification, and remorse, are concentrated upon the first acts of delinquency; but as transgression is repeated, and habits of evil are confirmed, sensibility is diminished to that degree that the more one deserves the less he endures. It is your bold, unblushing, hard-hearted guilt which has outlived the susceptibility to suffering. Where now is the theory of a perfect retribution in this present life?

We have not yet done with the statement of facts

bearing on this subject. There is an *instinct* in the human bosom—nor is this the least important of many facts—which anticipates the impartial and equitable application of retribution hereafter. I call this an instinct; because it is not a passion for revenge, nor a desire for retaliation, but a conviction of justice which belongs to every tribe and family of man. The method of proving and developing it is, to suppose yourself the victim of the most unprovoked and intolerable outrage. Your confidence has been betrayed, and your affection wounded. You have been wronged out of your property; yet in such an adroit and peculiar manner, that no law can reach the criminal, and your wrong must remain unredressed *for ever*. For ever? By no means. The most meek and lenient of men you may be; but, apart from every vindictive sentiment, you *know*, you *feel*—nor can you avoid it—that a time at length will come when the right will be vindicated, and the wrong will be punished. Mingle among men—meet them at the corners of the streets, as they converse about great injuries, and oppressions, and wrongs, to which they have been subject; the theological doctrine of a future retribution they may never have believed; but now you will see them, with a significant nod of the head, flying instinctively to the belief of ultimate justice: and they and we should be 'agonized if we thought that this controversy between the oppressor and the op-

pressed would not, one day, be fully and satisfactorily adjusted.'* It was Mr. Jefferson, and not the chaplain of Congress, who on a certain occasion said in his place, "I tremble when I remember that God is just!"

There can be no doubt that this law of retribution, which comes into our sight here and there, now and then, in this present life, and then passes, as it were, under the earth and beneath the sea, will emerge again beyond, in its undiverted and eternal jurisdiction. At this point comes in the distinct announcement of revelation—'God hath appointed a day when he shall judge the secrets of the heart, and render to every man according as his deeds have been.' The secrets of the heart? Surely. If there is to be any retribution hereafter, can you believe it to be otherwise than universal and impartial? Pause and reflect. Where is the idea of perfect justice, if retribution be not rendered according to the exact demerit of each? In the nature and necessity of things, human retribution is limited to overt acts. No such imperfection will attend the retribution of the Almighty!

Here are two men. In a sudden gust of passion, under the very highest provocation, one has thoughtlessly raised his hand, and the unexpected consequence is the loss of life under the blow. It was unpremeditated. It was the effect of a sudden impulse. No sooner is it done, than generous grief and compunction ensue. The

* Isaac Taylor's "Saturday Evening."

other marks his victim — dogs his steps day and night; cool and crafty, smooth and subtle, like a poisonous snake, he follows the man he hates, determined to take his life. Opportunity does not favor, and the only reason why murder most foul is not committed is, that he is disappointed in the convenience of an occasion. Where is even the conception of impartial justice if, at the last, retribution overtakes the former only, and leaves the latter untouched? The instincts of our nature point to truth; and God has forewarned the world that he hath appointed the time when delays shall be prolonged no more — when mistakes shall be rectified, wrongs redressed, and every act and every thought, deed, and intention, secret and public, shall pass under retributive attention, without partiality and without imperfection.

We have made no attempt to evade the unbending rectitude and impartiality of the retributive law. We have made no effort to conceal or deny those facts which belong to a strict interpretation of that divine rule, *reaping* according to *sowing*. Only a part of these facts have now come before us; sufficient, however, to convince us that there is a law of Nature, a law of our own being, a law of our bodies, a law of our minds, a law of revelation, a law of the universe, a law of the Most High God, which never can be interpreted too strictly — according to which, retribution is sure, sooner or later, to overtake evil-doing. The instincts

of humanity point to it. The old Greek tragedy reveals it. The Scriptures of God declare it. The word of the Almighty has assured us that heaven and earth shall pass away — sun, moon, and stars, shall fall from their places, like untimely figs — before that eternal decree of Heaven shall ever fail or falter.

And now, in our discussion of man's redemption and restoration, we must honestly meet this law of Nature, and comprehend, if we can, how we may deliver ourselves from its irresistible sweep and circuit. It will not satisfy a thoughtful man to descant in general and indefinite terms on the mere goodness of the Almighty. Notions of that goodness, like the soft haze of a Claude sky, may float through the imagination of the unbelieving; but tell us, oh, tell us, if you can, how mercy may rejoice against judgment; how men whose bodies and souls have experienced the evil consequences of sin — prodigal sons — publicans and sinners — men at the eleventh hour — thieves upon the cross — brought down by the tyranny of sin to the very last limit and extremity of infamy — tell us how such, how any, can ever be delivered from the steady and inflexible course of that retributive law which compels one to eat of the fruit of his own ways, and be filled with his own devices!

X.

RETRIBUTION AND MERCY.

It was the object of the preceding chapter to present the calmest statement of those facts which reveal the constituted and inseparable connection between *sin* and *penalty*. This connection is in the *order of Nature*. So obvious is it, that there is no need of rhetoric in its statement. It is like the laws which govern the stars. Tens of thousands have gazed during the past year on that celestial phenomenon which veiled the face of the queen of Night with shadow, without reflecting, perhaps, upon the one fact which imparted to the incident its chiefest interest. It fills us with wonder to be informed that so regular and precise are the movements of the planetarium, that an eclipse is calculated scores of years before its occurrence — the very second of time when it would commence, and the very second when it would terminate! Without the deviation of a hair's

breadth — with the accuracy of a mathematical certainty — the result corresponds to the prediction. Yet we are informed, by the Author of the universe, that all this precision, and accuracy, and certainty of Nature, do but illustrate the still higher precision and certainty of those laws which govern his moral economy. The law of retribution, therefore, is no accident. The connection between sin and penalty is no peradventure. The relation between sowing and reaping is no contingency. It is a fixed and immutable law. If it were not so, there were no place for faith, no foundation for the certainties of expectation. If the statutes of God's moral administration were subject to deflection and caprice — if the word of yesterday was falsified by the event of to-day — there were room enough for conjecture and for fear, but no resting-place for rational confidence.

The question, therefore, arises — 'If the law of retribution, the law of sowing and reaping, be so steady and steadfast in its operation, how can it comport with those promises of mercy which form the substance of the gospel of Christ? What place is there for the intervention of relief, without confusing or suspending the great laws and ordinances of the universe?' Ponder the question honestly — ponder it well — and tell us if *Reason* can solve it, and *Nature* give it an answer!

The retributive law leaves no hope for the dissolute.

It proffers no escape to those who have grown old and stout in the ways of sin. It is a doctrine designed to prevent the virtuous from lapsing into sin, but extends no ray of light for such as are already confirmed in practices of evil. If I am compelled to believe all which it inculcates, and *nothing more*, I should be in despair. It may be true, but it is merciless. Not stricter than I would wish if I were sinless as the angels, and desired to be kept from falling by the high ramparts of fear; but it is terrible, it is unrelenting, it is remorseless as the grave, to those who have fallen already. It silences the glad tidings of the gospel — that gospel which Jesus Christ preached to publicans and sinners; which he whispered to the dying thief on the cross; which we are taught to proclaim in prisons and penitentiaries, to the outcast and the abject, proffering salvation to all men, even to the uttermost.

It must be admitted, therefore, that it is a topic deserving our most careful and earnest attention, in what manner may mercy be made to accord and harmonize with the law of retribution.

We start, then, with admitting the retributive rule in its strictest interpretation — its unbending rectitude and impartiality. Nature and revelation agree in these premises. Reason and religion are here in perfect concord. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap."

Whosoever addicts himself to sin shall be visited with the consequences of sin. The law presides over life; it impends over the bed of death; it follows us into futurity. The gospel does not destroy this equitable ordinance. The gospel has its own penalties as well as the law. Whoever, under the gospel, adheres to habits of sin, will reap the retributive consequences of sin. It is in the New Testament—in the legislation of the Son of God, the merciful Redeemer of the world—that we read the fullest exposition of this natural and eternal enactment, *reaping* according to *sowing*. It is just as true to-day, just as true under the gospel, as it was four thousand years ago—as it was under a dispensation of law. There are no such threatenings in all the book of God as those which are uttered in the gospel against those who neglect, abuse, and despise the gospel. We hold to no theory of conversion, to no belief in divine mercy, which detracts from the unrelaxed severity of that rule which denounces wo on all those who take pleasure in, and who persist in, unrighteousness. We can more easily conceive of light without a shadow, than believe in sin unaccompanied by penalty. Mercy never lifts her hand to pluck down this high ordinance of God; but she herself, when she has promised hope and relief, repeats with a new emphasis the retributions which are sure to overtake such as obey not her suggestions. Reason and revelation

still accord throughout. The two guides still walk together side by side, hand in hand.

But this is not all which is revealed in the gospel. This is not the main teaching of the gospel. This is not the substance of the joyful sound. The design and the method of mercy are to work a change in man's own nature, and not in the law which repays guilt with punitive consequences. It converts man from the evil of his ways. It promises him no exemption so long as he perseveres in forbidden courses, but helps him to turn from the same, so bringing him under a law of life and gladness. The wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness, but the gospel interposes itself to arrest unrighteousness in the man, and not to change the steadfast ordinances of the Almighty. It calls on the wicked man to forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. The summons of the gospel, rung out with a clear and clarion sound, is, "*Repent and be converted.*" Jesus Christ comes to turn every one from his iniquities. He that sinned is bidden to sin no more — for the best and greatest of reasons, that love and mercy are waiting to deliver. We can not discover the passage in the gospel which promises deliverance and exemption to sin, while sin is persisted in. We read the many passages which announce hope and help to the very worst, to the outcasts of the human species — help to the uttermost — help at

the eleventh hour—if they will *repent*, if they will, with a thorough hatred of sin, forsake it, and reform of it.

Such is the message which we bear everywhere and to every man. There is not a member of the human family to whom we would not carry these glad tidings of great joy. Tell us who is the guiltiest of men, and we will assure him, in God's name, that for him there is a remission of sins, if he will repent and reform. We go to the inmates of prison cells; the thief in his meanness, the burglar in his boldness, the murderer in his malice; to the most brutal of their species, in Christ's stead, we would bear this gospel, that for them there is mercy and forgiveness, if they will repent. We go to the bedside of the man who is just terminating a dissolute life in remorse, anguish, and despair, and in the name of Him who pardoned the thief upon the cross, in the very act and article of death, we would assure him that for him there is mercy if he will repent. If he will repent! We shall have something to say before we finish as to the probabilities or improbabilities of his repentance; but there can be no doubt as to the nature of those terms proposed in the gospel—mercy to all, whenever and wherever *there is repentance*.

What now becomes of the stern and strict law of retribution, which, as we have seen, is so exacting and so

unbending? Is it abolished? Abrogated? Nay, rather is it *confirmed.* The child of guilt, through the greatness of a Power which surpasses nature, is himself changed and converted, so that a new class of results follows his new class of actions. The retributive law keeps on in its high and changeless way, but the subject of it, *through might higher than himself*, is changed in feeling, act, and character, and so is delivered from any further accumulation of its inflictions. His own present is changed, and his own future changes with it. Turning from a life of sin, he is exposed no more to the penalties of sin.

But what for the sins which are already past? What becomes of those retributions already entailed by guilty courses? Does mercy arrest and suspend them at once upon repentance? Not even that. Look again at that victim of disease who is dying in a hospital. Let us suppose that, on the very verge of the grave, he listens to the words of Christian kindness, and ingenuously repents before his Maker. Does mercy in an instant reverse or arrest or annul the law of retribution? Does he arise from his bed and walk as if he had escaped from the sheriff-grasp of retributive power? Does the assurance of forgiveness cool the fever in his bones, and serve as an opiate to that pain which is eating into his marrow? Does a moral medicine cure a physical mischief? Does the disabled prisoner, held

fast in the cords of his sins, spring to his feet, running and leaping like him who was healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, at the gate Beautiful? Nothing of this. The gospel even does not promise to do this. The mercy which lays her balm to the broken spirit does not hold back that pain, that sickness, or that death, which are the retributive effects of former iniquities. The man, if he is a penitent, though he is a penitent, may die prematurely because of his former habits. The process of retribution is not delayed within our sight, save in regard to the remorse and anguish of spirit, which are soothed by the assurance of divine forgiveness.

But how is it, how shall it be, beyond? Reason tells us that the law keeps on, even when it passes out of our sight, on and on, changing all into a likeness to its dread self. Nature and revelation agree in the faith, that tribulation and anguish in the life to come are the penalties of transgressions unrepented of in the life which now is. Nature has no method of arresting this decree. Reason can not prove to us how there is any flaw in the chain of sequences. But what *nature* could not do, a power higher than nature can do. What never could be accomplished by the natural, may be and is accomplished by the *super*natural. The power which arrests and turns aside the constituted penalties of sin, by free remission, is as truly above and beyond

nature as any miracle which was ever wrought by the exercise of divine power.

On one occasion a paralytic was brought to the Son of God, helpless upon a bed. We are not definitely informed that his physical malady was the result of sinful courses, but our Lord immediately said to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." When infidelity scoffed at his language he said again, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sin," he said to the sick and disabled man, "Rise up and walk," and he did as he was bidden. He wrought a miracle upon the body in proof of his power to heal and save the soul beyond the ability of nature, beyond the power of humanity. It is a *supernatural* power which intervenes to arrest those retributive laws which would otherwise crush and destroy whatever is in their way.

We perfectly agree with the deduction of Reason, that nature hath no mercy, no relief, no deliverance, no salvation for the guilty. Adhere to what the reason proves, and to *nothing more*, and there is no hope. But this is the actual miracle of Christ's mercy, that coming to the weary and heavy laden, converting them from sin, turning them to newness of life, he lightens the penalty — lifts off by a gradual relief the curse and the burden, and with partial restoration now, by his *supernatural* and divine achievements, promises, for the life to come, entire exemption, complete and eter-

nal deliverance. This ultimate and perfected restoration of man is represented as an achievement of divine power greater than that which made the worlds, and broke the bars of death.

Here is a man who has been addicted to no habits which have entailed suffering and pain upon the body. He has not been inclined to intemperance; he has not been dissolute. But he has developed a general meanness and dishonesty of character. He has done hard things. He has a reputation for trickiness and deceit. We will suppose that to such a man — even to such — the gospel comes with its usual terms and announcements — forgiveness, eternal life, if he repents. Let us suppose that he does repent; that there is a thorough transformation of his nature; that, in the school of Christ, he learns lessons of honesty, and truth, and nobility, such as never he knew before. He is now a sincere Christian. Nevertheless, he is not immediately released from the law of retribution. For a long time — it may be so long as he lives — he will suffer many of the consequences of his former courses. He will be suspected. He will be distrusted. Shadows will rest upon him. He may, by utmost endeavor to walk consistently with his new principles, outlive these suspicions, and recover the confidence of his fellow-men. But it would be strange if, to his dying day, he did not reap many serious consequences of his earlier habits.

It is an undoubted fact that men who have been converted to God from habits of profligacy, sincere Christians as they were, have reaped, in bitter memories, in impaired health, in loss of position, in social interdicts, suspicions, and slights, the harvest of their early and foolish sowing.

If any man on this footstool of God ever gave proof of sincere conversion, of thorough reformation of character, life, and conduct, it was Bunyan—it was John Newton. No one has read the biography of these distinguished trophies of divine grace with any care, who has not observed how much, amid all the gladness and hopes of their new life, they suffered in body and spirit the consequences of their earlier irregularities. So was it with Augustine. The islanders of the Pacific, in the new hopes of the religion which has been sent to them, will suffer to the end of life many a sad penalty of those crimes which they perpetrated in the days of their heathenism and ignorance.

When the mercy of Christ arrests and converts the sinner, it does not *instantly* arrest *all* the effects of antecedent sin. It changes the man, not the law of retribution. It gives him new purposes, new principles, a new nature, and a new character, so that he gradually emerges from the power and consequence of sin. And as for those ultimate and eternal penalties which are revealed against iniquity in another world, we believe

that they are arrested solely by *supernatural* power. It is not in man to achieve that great deliverance. It is not in Nature to promise it. It is not in Reason to discover it. He who proved himself the Author of Nature —at whose advent the stars in their courses did homage—whose word burst the bondage of graves and death—whose touch wrought miracles of healing—and at whose expiring the sun veiled itself in gloom—he, the very Maker and upholder of this great system of Nature, with its laws and compensations, its decrees and its penalties—he alone is able to deliver, by a supernatural power, and for supernatural reasons, the soul of the sinner from the second death.

It would detract materially from our faith and gladness if we were compelled to believe that the thief on the cross was taken to the paradise of God, in accordance with equitable retribution—because he was in heart and life a good man, and so had always been, notwithstanding the one accident which brought him to execution. We believe that he was a sinner of high degree; we believe it according to his own confession: "We indeed suffer justly." We believe it according to the whole drift of the narrative, and the picture of the scene. We believe that he repented. We will not pretend to explain that repentance on principles of mere reason and nature: we believe that his heart was converted by the grace of God, just as his foot touched the

threshold of that prison from which goeth out no one for ever; and we believe that, as a penitent snatched from the jaws of death, he was taken to the paradise of God by an act as truly supernatural on the part of our divine Redeemer as that which arrests sun, moon, and stars, in their orbits. Leave us to Nature alone, and we are in despair. Preach to us natural laws, and *nothing more*, and we see no hope for the guilty. We have what is more than Nature, what is higher and mightier — the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the triumphant mercy of Omnipotence. With such a help and such a hope, we can preach the gospel to the most abandoned of men.

It is not *against* God, not an "irrational and unauthorized praying," when we pray for the dying sinner, in the eleventh hour of his probation. All things are possible with Him whose mercy rejoiceth against judgment. We love to rehearse the miracles of his compassion — Mary Magdalen — the thief on the cross — the conversion of Saul — the arrest and turning about of the chief of sinners. We have no fear of exaggerating the power and promises of the gospel, or of transcending the bounds of soberness in describing its illimitable mercy to the penitent. "*Whosoever repenteth, shall be saved.*" That word which came down from the skies is to be heralded throughout the earth, for it comes from One who is *mighty* to save.

But does not such a doctrine foster presumption? Does it not encourage to postpone repentance to the latest necessity? Is not its sure and direct tendency to induce the thoughtless and even the profligate to persist in their ways till the last moment of opportunity, in the vain expectation that a miraculous exercise of merciful power will rescue them when about to take the plunge into a hidden futurity?

To reason thus is to leave out of account the very head and front of the whole matter. It is to drop the very chief item in the computation. The gospel of Jesus Christ, in all its miracles of compassion, in all its prodigies of salvation, saves no man *in* his sins and *in* his impenitence. Its invariable terms to all are, salvation to those who repent and believe. Ah, what a world and weight of meaning in that small word—*if* he repent! He must be a changed man who would be a saved man. He must be brought to know ingenuous sorrow for sin, and lively faith in the Redeemer, before he may appropriate to himself one promise of the great salvation. *If* he repents! Judge soberly, now, whether there be any encouragement to presumption and procrastination in any of the glorious promises of mercy, so long as they stand connected with the terms and condition of sincere repentance.

Does not this very law of retribution which we have met, operating steadily under law and under grace, so

affect and visit the heart of the presumptuous, that the least probable thing in the universe at length may be that he *will repent?* The law of habit, is it not a part of this law of retribution? May it not so accumulate its powers—imbedding itself in the very foundations of one's nature—drawing to itself all strength from time, and invigorating itself with the passage of years—that at last the most dreadful form of retribution which can ever overtake man on earth is in that very hardness of heart which is entailed by delay, in that very impenitence which is the response and consequence of an impenitence which went before. While this is the gospel—salvation to the *penitent*, even in death, even to the uttermost—does not this retributive law throw in its doubts, its fears, and its apprehensions, about the probability and *reality* of that later and death-bed repentance? No misgivings have we as to God's willingness to forgive the penitent at the very latest moment: our misgivings are all of this kind—whether a man who has lived in impenitence, through a whole life of privilege and mercy, will be likely to become a penitent after the accumulated results of life-long habit and delay. Not the shadow of a doubt have we that the mercy of God would pardon any sincere penitent, even amid the convulsions and prostrations of death; but many a doubt have we whether he whose indisposition to religious things has been growing and strengthening

from youth to manhood, even to old age, will find himself disposed or able, at an instant of emergency and fear, to counteract the adverse tendencies of his whole existence. Impenitence he has sown, and impenitence he is now reaping. Regrets, sorrows, spring unbidden in his bosom; but these are not repentance. These convulsive moments of an affrighted spirit are not that change in the heart itself which the gospel requires as indispensable.

There is no place where this law of retribution, which is inwrought into our very bodies and souls, puts on so stern an aspect, and reveals so fearful a power, as in the last days of the man who, through years of God's forbearance, has been practising himself in unbelief and confirming himself in habits of impenitence, under the full light and love of the gospel. God has promised no miracle of deliverance to the impenitent and the prayerless. One may fall from dizzy heights, and not be harmed; one may lie down in fire, and not be burned; one may be immersed in the sea, and not be drowned: the imagination may conceive of such miracles, but sober reason revolves the question whether, in the gospel itself, or in human observation, there has ever been discovered a promise of interposing power which will make it easy for one to repent who, after a hard and impenitent heart, has been heaping up, week by week, year by year, the obstacles to his own return!

We have no reason for believing that the thief on the cross had ever heard of Christ before he was brought in contact with his mercy, in the very hour of his bitter passion and death. There is no parallelism between the quick repenting of such a man, in his first interview with the Redeemer, and the presumptuous expectations of the man who has heard of Christ from his very cradle. Yes, we will magnify the grace of our God; we will preach its largeness and fullness; we will repeat the angel-songs of Bethlehem; we will tell of Christ lifted up to draw all men unto him; we will rehearse his world-wide promises of forgiveness; we will point to him in the attitude of stretching out his arms to welcome the weary and heavily laden; we will take the word which last fell from his lips, and Spirit and Bride will herald it everywhere—"*Come*, whosoever will." This we will do, in solemn faith that there is no number or aggravation of sins which outreach his power to save, *if* they are repented of and forsaken.

But if there are any who, under sabbath skies, and angel voices, and gospel songs, and pleadings of mercy, and welcomings of love, and promises of help, and visions of heaven, will not repent, and will not believe—presuming, neglecting, trifling, delaying—then must we warn them that, according to the unrepealed and steadfast ordinance of retribution, the time will come—and it shall be when their need is greatest, even when they

are made to look down into the grave and the terrific mysteries which lie beyond—when they shall be so beset and depressed by the very difficulties of former habit, that the very hardest thing to be conceived of is for those to pray who never prayed before—for those to repent who never repented before; so that the mistaken man who counted on repenting in the sudden emergency of fear, and necessity, and death, discovers when too late that all his life long he has been treasuring up wrath against himself—hardening his heart, so that, though he smites upon it, the rock will yield no tenderness.

Little need is there, as it would seem, of caution and exhortation, after giving a clear and correct statement of the calm and steadfast ordinance of retribution. But when mercy and retribution are brought before us in their proper conjunction, the heart must be inhuman and the tongue speechless which would not admonish men to beware how they NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION.

XI.

SUPERNATURAL RELIEF FOR NATURAL EVILS.

The impression is common that the evils and penalties which follow transgression are, in some manner, superinduced by revealed religion. Because the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments recognise and sanction such retributive consequences of sin, many infer that they are responsible for them, and produce them, by an arbitrary decree, after such a manner, that, if the Scriptures had not referred to them, the penalties themselves would not have existed.

It has been our endeavor, therefore, to show that the *law of retribution* is a *law of Nature*. It is not induced by an arbitrary enactment. It is altogether independent of a written revelation. The one true religion of the world is, in no sense, responsible for it. The retributive consequences of evil-doing would remain the same, for both worlds, if the Christian religion

were utterly and for ever abolished. These result, as we say, in the *nature of things*. The constitution of the universe is arranged on the principle of rewards for the good and penalties for the evil. We speak now of what is palpable to the skeptic as to the believer in the gospel; of something which is entirely distinct and disconnected from faith in revealed religion. A man violates the laws of his physical constitution, and the penalty is physical suffering, disease, and death. All the hospitals of the world give their proof of this. Physicians, and not preachers, are authorities and witnesses on this point. Man is so constituted, that this result is inevitable. It is an ordinance of Nature, which is unaffected by belief or unbelief.

Man is a member of society, and, as such, comes in contact with social laws. These may be of various degrees of excellence, but society can not exist without some law. Transgress these enactments of society, and the penalty is fine, imprisonment, transportation, the gallows. These are facts in the history of humanity, and not theories of political economists—facts which we should encounter did we travel to the ends of the earth, even if there were no such thing in existence as a written revelation from God.

So of that highest of all laws, *the spiritual*—it is founded in the very nature of that relation which sub-

sists between God as Creator and man as a creature—between infinite excellence and finite dependence. He who breaks away from this law of duty, must, in the nature of things, separate himself from God, lose the sense of God's favor, and incur the sense of God's displeasure. We can not conceive that it could be otherwise. It is not the written law which produces this separation, or enacts this penalty. The entire volume of inspiration *recognises* this penalty, and justifies it, but never creates it in such a sense that, if it were not written therein, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," that result would not come to pass. It would come to pass, as we believe, by the natural course of things, in accordance with the eternal constitution of the universe. That men should be punished for the infringement of those ordinances which govern their physical, social, and moral nature, there is no necessity of special legislation. All that is requisite is, that things should be left to their natural course. It is not because it is written in this volume that woes, and pains, and shame, and poverty, are the retribution of idleness, intemperance, and dissolute habits, that these results come to pass; but this is written because they do come to pass—because it is an indisputable fact in Nature that such results proceed from such causes.

Beyond all dispute, this *is* the teaching of Nature. This is the *law* of God's created system, ordained when

the foundations of the world were laid. Written laws may announce this fact, but they do not originate it. The fact, as a stern verity of Nature, exists where there is no written revelation. If every verse, every line, every word, in the entire volume of inspiration, which alludes to retribution in this life or the life to come, were expunged, it would be no less true, while the system of Nature is undisturbed, that the violation of her ordinances will be visited by her own retributions. That men should suffer in consequence of sin — suffer in health, if they transgress physical laws — in reputation, if they transgress social laws — in remorse, and exile from God, if they transgress spiritual laws — nothing needs to be enacted, nothing whatever to be done. Let the natural course of things be uninterrupted, and these results are certain. Fire is sure to burn, if it have its way. Nothing new, nothing whatever is to be done to make certain this result. To *prevent* that result requires some positive interposition, something which will arrest the natural law.

Nature has many wonderful provisions and compensations, but, if we will carefully observe, not one by way of arresting the law of retribution. If one of the senses be lost, there is a most kind and compensatory action of Nature by which every other sense seems to be quickened and endowed for the emergency. If a joint be removed by a surgical operation, there appears

at once a new energy of Nature to supply the deficiency by some provision of her own. Nothing like this appears in Nature to prevent the retributive consequences of sin; nothing like a relaxing or letting up of her own ordinances in the case of such as do evil. This it is which makes the religion of Nature the most stern and relentless for all but the innocent. The common impression is the reverse of this.

Many associate the religion of Nature with flowers, and birds, and stars—with blossomings of trees and exuberance of fruits. These, indeed, are facts of Nature, but they are not the only facts. These are the facts which teach us the care and kindness of the Great Author of Nature toward all his creatures. Beside these are those other facts—the pains, the maladies, the woes, of all descriptions, that follow evil courses—which attest that the Being who made man and the world intended that sin should be visited by retribution. For innocence, for misfortune, for mere accident—if we may use such a word when speaking of Providence—there are compensations, and reliefs, and extempore provisions; but, for guilt, *Nature* has no relief and no remedy! Egregiously mistaken are such as eulogize natural religion in opposition to that which is revealed—as if the one spoke only in bloom and beauty, and the other in tones of terror and denunciation. The terms of this common conception should be reversed

entirely and altogether. It is natural religion, unaccompanied by any revelation of positive relief, which is terrible — terrible and unrelenting to the last degree — to the guilty; while the peculiarity of revelation is, as its name imports, that it *makes known* the fact of somewhat interposed and novel.

If you would kill out all hope from the heart of the guilty, leave them alone. Leave them to the religion of Nature. Leave them to the natural result of things — to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices. If you would overwhelm, crush, and ruin the guilty, leave them to themselves. *Do* nothing. *Enact* nothing. No need of laws to condemn them. No need of menaces and statute penalties. Withdraw thyself and leave them to the steady, changeless, relentless order of Nature! But if you would save them, something must be *interposed.* Some arrest must be laid upon the tendencies and workings of Nature. If you would deliver and restore such as have violated the eternal ordinances of Nature, then something positive is to be done suited to the emergency. Now we look for something which is more than Nature — *above and beyond Nature.* There must be a stoppage of the natural order of things — some new and positive measure introduced.

And this, precisely, is what is done by the gospel of Jesus Christ. The very word announces the character

of the measure. It is "news," "good news," "glad tidings of great joy." It is something out of the ordinary and constituted channel of things. It was not developed by nature, but revealed directly from heaven. It is something brought—something *given*—something interposed. It was announced by angels—it was fully accomplished by the Son of God. Many have endeavored to reason that Christianity was a mere subjective hypothesis of the human mind; a product and fabrication of man's own nature; but just this is the peculiarity of the gospel, a positive gift and interposition of the Most High. To punish those who had made infraction of God's law, nothing unusual—nothing out of the ordinary course of things was necessary; but to save from punishment, to restore and retrieve, redeem and deliver, required what was extraordinary and preternatural. This is what the gospel actually promises and accomplishes. This is the sole object and design of the gospel. It does this, and nothing *but this*. It *saves*—it does not punish. Jesus Christ came not to *condemn* the world, but to *deliver*. Condemnation was already. Suffering existed already. Some of the evil consequences of transgression already abounded; and these foreshadowed other retributions future and inevitable. There was no need of anything further being accomplished by way of insuring punitive judgment. That had long since begun its drear and immitigable course.

The gospel was a measure of relief—a stay of proceedings—an arrest of sentence—a suspension of the natural process, by adequate help. It has itself no more to do by way of accounting for the sins and sufferings of mankind than medicines and hospitals are responsible for those diseases which they design to cure. A pardon does not create the penalty which it remits.

There is but one aspect, one object in the gospel of our Lord—to relieve from evils already existing—deliver from woes which without it would have been unchecked and unmitigated. Not only is this the sole and exclusive object of the gospel, but besides the gospel there is nothing which promises to do the same. *Cruel* are they who would give us only the creed of nature. Merciless is that religion which deals only with natural laws; for while it sometimes discourses of the birds of the air, and the lilies of the fields, nay, while it always discourses in images of beauty and tones of gladness to the good and innocent, it has woes in reserve for the guilty, from which they can not escape, as they can not fly from the eternal laws which bind the universe; and if you take away that supernatural revelation of interposed relief, nothing remains but a certain looking for of judgment in accordance with those ordinances which otherwise never are diverted.

Let us, therefore, look awhile at the operation of this curative agency upon existing evils. We have

already considered at considerable length the manner in which the gospel of Christ applies its superabounding mercy for the *remission* of *sin*. Let us not overlook its method of relief for other necessities of humanity.

Men everywhere are exposed to *calamity* and *grief*. Troubles beset man, cares depress him, and sorrow burdens him. It has been so in all ages, since fallen Adam wept over the corpse of Abel. Marble philosophy affirms that these misfortunes are the result of fixed ordinances of nature which may not be changed. It is a subject on which the writers of classic antiquity descanted much. We have on record the plaintive letter of the great Roman orator on the death of his own daughter Tullia. In his correspondence with a friend, he lays open his whole heart, under the visitations of sorrow. He travels. He visits foreign scenes. He seeks to divert his mind from the affliction on which it preys. Here is a deep and irremediable sorrow; and the only relief which nature can promise is that time will gently and gradually mitigate the grief. Ye who mourn the loss of your best friends, tell us whether you will accept that consolation which springs from forgetfulness. Judge ye that the time will ever come when you will wish to think less, to mourn less, than now, over the graves where sleep the forms most endeared to you? These bereavements are abroad in the world, in all places and in all forms. Explain them, account

for them, as you may. Call them accidents. Call them misfortunes. Call them fatalities. Reason yourself into stoicism. Persuade yourself that these are inevitable events, and that you can not escape the common lot of humanity. In this you are in part correct. The gospel promises no exemption from them. But it accomplishes more than this. It consoles. It cures. Like an angel-form brightening through the gloom, it brings a balm to the wound. Cold Philosophy passes by on the other side, or if she speaks to the sufferer she says, in stately speech, "*Be strong, and bear it well.*" "Be brave." "Be a man." The religion of the Redeemer introduces a positive cure. It binds up the wound, pouring in oil and wine. It explains to man the meaning of afflictions, the source from which they come, the wisdom and love of an overruling Providence, the benefits which flow from them, the repose of faith, the sweetness of resignation, the brightness of hope, and the certainty of that future state where all troubles shall cease, where friends separated by death shall meet again, where joy perpetual and unblighted shall succeed sorrow, and tears shall be wiped away from every eye. This is a positive, extraordinary, and supernatural revelation. The evil is, as we say, natural —the consolation is above Nature, it is a divine interposition. Nature affirms, and facts echo it, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But Christianity, by

the mouth of her Lord, answers, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Then comes that grand catastrophe *death*, that mystery, that shame, that terror, that abhorrence of humanity. We need no proof of the fact that man dies—that all men die. The learned reason that death is in accordance with a natural law; that men are made to die, as trees have their time to grow, decay, and fall. We believe, though there may have been death in the animal creation before man was made, that death passes upon all *men* because all have sinned. The knowledge which we derive from revelation on this point, however, has nothing whatever to do with the resistless power and certainty of death. Death would be no less inevitable if we did not know under what circumstances, in what connection, it invaded the world. Before revelation, without revelation, in ages past, in all ages, and in all lands, the destroyer is busy at his work. Call it a law of Nature or what you will, the drear and dreadful fact is the same. That man should die, there is no necessity that anything should be done. The ordinary and changeless course of the human race is to the grave. Generation after generation follow each other thitherward. A skeleton hand points the procession of the ages to one and the same spot—the sepulchre. There is no turning back, or turning aside, so as not to enter that door of gloom. This is an inev

itable certainty of Nature. That man should die — die with fear, die without hope, die in mystery — to make sure of this result, leave them as they are. Reveal nothing, interpose nothing; leave the race with solemn and sullen march and dejected face, to their destiny.

But if you would *mitigate* this great evil, if you would *redeem* man from its power, if you would arrest and change all these affrights and despondencies of nature, then somewhat which is preternatural and extraordinary must be brought into operation. And this is the very object and effect of the gospel. It comes to change the whole aspect of death, reigning with terror from the sin of Adam down to the birth of the Redeemer. This celestial visitant, like the shining angel in the tomb of Jesus, takes her stand at the door of the sepulchre, and the light she bears shines far within, yea, entirely through the dark valley.

As revealed religion did not produce death, nor inflict it, but *finds* it as a fact already existing, so all its extraordinary power is applied, not to *prevent* death, but so to change its whole aspect and quality, that the curse shall be converted into a blessing, and men may be more than willing, even glad to die. It is the gospel which extracts the sting of death, depriving it of all power to harm the feeblest believer. To all intents, death is actually *abolished*. By a divine revelation we are assured that death is not the destruction of

humanity. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. The body itself shall be raised again, and, perfected and refined itself, shall be conjoined to a refined and perfected spirit. In proof and promise of this great achievement, the Son of God himself became subject unto death, and rose again from its power. The one sweeping fact of mortality is confronted by another fact, extraordinary and miraculous, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here is positive help and hope for man, under the most abhorrent event which Nature knows. It is consolation imparted in reference to a pre-existing evil. From being the ghastly King of Terrors, striking down the helpless into the dust, and trampling upon humanity with his iron heel, Death, by the intervention of the Redeemer, is converted into a minister of mercy — unclothing the child of God, that he may be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. How soft and grateful the light which it sheds on the grave! It is not the Jack-o'-lantern of superstition which flits and flickers there. It is the halo of hope — the reflection of heaven's own peace and repose.

Surely we need not pause to furnish proof that the gospel is in fact equal to all these promises. The proof is present to us in the memory of those who have died from our own homes, and from out of our own arms. There is nothing which interests us more than accounts

which reach us of the safe and victorious death of others, even though they are strangers to us. Our common nature is putting to the test this heaven-descended and supernatural Helper. Afflicted humanity, doomed to the grave, is believing and trying that miraculous support which is revealed from God by our Redeemer.

Thus might we proceed to illustrate the same aspect of the gospel toward *other* objects, and other evils, as the extraordinary method of their relief or removal. Write the history of all those mischiefs which came in with the apostacy. Descant on the great law of cause and effect. Prove to us that this long series of events is bound together by a natural order and necessity. We will not dispute it; we believe it ourselves. And we wish you to believe that, according to the natural order of events, there is nothing, there can be nothing, but suffering and misery in the track and train of sin. There is no danger, even as it has been affirmed by those who have little faith in divine revelation, of interpreting this retributive law too strictly or too severely. But the main thing we would receive, and that with joy, is the announcement by our Divine Restorer that his help is out of and above the ordinary drift and direction of things — a supernatural and miraculous interposition, so extraordinary, so joyful, that angels are sent to herald it, and the rocks and the floods are invoked to sing and clap their hands for the gladness and

greatness of the tidings! *Labor*—hard, sweating, drudging labor—came with the curse. The gospel *finds* this depressing and crushing load, and offers to lighten it. It converts labor into genial work, inspires industry with reward and satisfaction, and teaches man to sing at his toil.

The *principle* is the same in all cases—in regard to all causes which tend to afflict, burden, and depress mankind. These are all the natural and constituted penalties of apostacy. The religion of Christ is not responsible for them, any more than is infidelity. They exist; they could not but exist in a state of things such as God has ordained. The gospel of the Redeemer has but one design—to interpose a special and extraordinary help and cure. It finds the prisoner in his cell, and comes to throw open the door. It finds the eye of the blind shut in night, and pours light upon the sightless eyeball. The ear of the deaf is shut already, and the gospel utters its "*ephphatha!*"—be opened! The mind of the imbecile is sunk into idiocy, and Christ the Divine Restorer strengthens the enfeebled understanding and endows it with the capacity of knowledge. Multitudes are broken-hearted and mourning, and Christ brings them the oil of joy and the garment of praise. The world is under the curse and condemnation of sin, and the gospel proclaims forgiveness and salvation.

What, now, if this extraordinary relief were with-

held? What if all the assertions of infidelity were true, so that we could not believe in the gospel of the Redeemer? What if every copy of the Scriptures were withdrawn from the world, every communion-table forsaken, every Christian assembly disbanded? What if, with common consent, the human race should be converted into atheists, and there were no sabbath, and all knowledge of Christ and his redemption should depart, like the lost Pleiad? Would one of the evils of the world go with it? Not one! How have you benefited the race, by removing that which promises relief—which has no other object or purpose than to cure evils which existed before, and exist without it? You take away the physician, and leave the disease! You deny the exercise of mercy, and leave the curse unmitigated!

Grant everything which the boldest infidelity has ever asserted; admit that Voltaire, when he scoffed at Christ—Hume, when he argued against the miracles of our Lord—Strauss, when he philosophized away the historic facts of redemption; admit, for one blank instant of time that they were all true—what have you gained? You are thorough infidels; but infidels concerning what? Concerning the gospel which proposes to relieve and restore. But what concerning those great facts which entail suffering and misery upon humanity? This is the main thing. We will speak of the gospel afterward. The evils themselves, does infi-

delity suspend them, arrest them, change them, prevent them? If not, what is its advantage? It takes away Christ, but leaves sin. It forbids the remedy, but leaves the leprosy burning like fire into flesh and bones. It takes away the gospel, and leaves the stern facts and realities of Nature. Sorrow, affliction, remorse, sweat, labor, sickness, bereavement, death—it leaves them all in the world! It extinguishes no evil, wipes no tear, imparts no comfort; and hence it is that, granting all that infidelity ever claimed, it disbelieves nothing but the remedy, and leaves man to be broken and crushed by those great laws and facts of Nature which roll over him more resistless than the mighty wheels which Ezekiel saw in his vision at Chebar.

If any man disbelieves the gospel of Christ, the only result is, that he leaves himself in that very state in which he was without the gospel. Infidelity is a mere negation. It does not pretend to supply the place which it has vacated. It takes away the Saviour who was born in Bethlehem, but does it substitute a better? It leaves man to suffer, sorrow, weep, and die, unconsoled, unhelped, uncheered, and unblessed!

Leaves him as before, did we say? With one grave supplement of misery! The disease is exasperated when remedies are rejected; and the infatuation which refuses the friendly offices of the Redeemer, can only treasure up and aggravate the miseries of remorse.

There is no other Saviour than he whom angels announced; there is no other gospel than that which was preached by the Son of God. We know not where to find any other consolation than that revealed to us from on high. Ask us not to part with it till you have certified to that which is better. This has proved itself divine by the miracle of its cures, the wonders of its conversions, the prodigies of its saving power. Our gratitude kindles anew at the tidings. Let us sing for joy, because of what it promises. In sorrow, let us make it our refuge; in fear, our trust; in life, our help; in death, our hope and eternal salvation!

THE PARADISE OF GOD.

Then said the shepherds one to another, Let us here show the pilgrims the gates of the Celestial City, if they have skill to look through our perspective-glass. The pilgrims lovingly accepted the motion: so they led them to the top of a high hill, called Clear, and gave them the glass to look.

They thought they saw something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place.

Pilgrim's Progress.

XII.

THE CELESTIAL PARADISE.

YEARS ago, there was in your dwelling a young child of surpassing beauty and loveliness. Its gleesome voice was music to your ear, and its graceful motions were music to your eye. Perfect in the moulding of its form and the finish of its features, full of love and full of joy, it seemed like a vision of light from the skies. Disease touched it, and it withered in a night. It died, and was buried. Though you would have given it all which you had in the world, the only thing which you *could* give it was a *grave*. You chose the spot, and raised some simple memorial, bearing its name, a sculptured flower or lamb, or other emblem of its innocence and frailty. It has gone from you for ever. "*Where* has it gone?" Months and years elapse. Now and then you come upon some object in your home which, associated with him, brings him before you as if he were

alive again—a toy, or a little shoe. You take it in your hand, and ask again: 'Where, where is my child? He is gone; but *where* has he gone? I can not believe that he has perished. Are we not living under a system of divine restoration? Did not the Redeemer of the world place the highest value on the life of a child? Did he not connect infancy with the kingdom of heaven? *Where* is that kingdom? *What* is that kingdom? I read of it—I hear of it; I see it not as yet, but I know there must be some other world than this, in which life, so abruptly terminated here, is resumed, renewed, and perpetuated. Nature suffers nothing to be wasted. She is the greatest economist. The very fragments are gathered, that nothing may be lost. Forms change, but substances never perish out of the universe; and the soul which God created, and Christ redeemed, must be living still, though withdrawn from my sight.'

There was a man in the maturity of his ample faculties. His youth had been one of irreligion and folly. By the grace of Jesus Christ, he had been thoroughly converted. He begins a new life, with higher aims and nobler ends. He has just discovered the value of existence. His mind thirsts for knowledge, and his heart for goodness. He starts on a career of Christian usefulness. He is a living proof and demonstration of Christ's competency to redeem and restore. His speech,

his daily conduct, his sweetness of temper, his religious living, are objects of notice and admiration. He is a model of Christian character. Just as he reaches this degree of ripeness, this promise and preparation for true living, Death strikes him, and he falls. "Wherefore is this waste?" we are ready to exclaim. 'Is this the end of all the expense which has been bestowed upon his redemption? Was it for these few days of imperfect happiness upon the earth that the Son of God consented to pay so great a ransom? Is this the end of that travail of Christ's soul, with which he is satisfied—that a man should be converted, know in part, be sanctified in part, and then perish for ever?' The absurdity of such an idea makes us impatient of its presence. That restorative process which our Redeemer begins on earth is a pledge of its consummation in another life. That which we see of Christian goodness here is but the promise of its ultimate perfection hereafter.

Where have they gone—the good, the redeemed? To THE PARADISE OF GOD. Redemption has its *beginning* here, but not its *end*. There is another world in which are gathered the perfected results of that great restoration which is by Jesus Christ. Here he calls, he justifies, he sanctifies; but there he glorifies. A great thing is that which he accomplishes on the earth, when he delivers man from the power of sin and death, gives

him peace of conscience, restores some measure of confidence and love, implants new principles in his soul, and brings him under the power of hope. But a greater still is that which to us is yet future, when restoration is complete, every vestige of the curse removed, and redeemed man is put in possession of a greater good than was ever lost in Eden.

Far more has Christ accomplished for man than if, in the gorgeous East—"in Persia, Araby, or Ind"—he had planted another garden like that which was the home of the first pair, and, forgiving and forgetting all that was past, had placed man therein, innocent and happy, with eternal well-being suspended upon his continuance. Would you count it a joyful thing if primeval paradise could be restored, and you, in person, were to partake of its bliss? More than this is actually true. There is a celestial paradise better than all the glories of Eden. We are not bidden to look backward, with sighs and regrets; but to look forward, with joyful hope and expectation.

The heavenly Paradise is not a myth nor a fancy. Like Eden and Gethsemane, it is an historical reality. When the Son of God was ready to expire, he said to the penitent malefactor at his side, "To-day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*." Favored of God, with special encouragements amid his extraordinary endurances, the apostle to the Gentiles was once caught up into Par-

adise, and in the third heavens of delight heard voices of gladness such as never before had fallen on a mortal's ear; and the promise has gone forth from the mouth of our Lord that whoever shall overcome, continuing to the end, shall "eat of the tree of life which is in THE PARADISE OF GOD."

Into this enclosure we are now to enter. From the garden of apostacy, and the garden of atoning sorrow, we pass to that garden of restoration, where redeemed man finds his ultimate security and blessedness. It is not on the earth. No mortal eye hath seen it. We will indulge in no curious speculations concerning its topography or material. The Holy Ghost has employed a great variety of imagery to describe that abode of consummate perfection. Now we are told of "green pastures" and "still waters"—the sweet river of the water of life—with trees on either side bearing all manner of fruits, and in the midst of the garden that tree of life once forfeited and now restored, with no interdict upon its fruition, no flaming sword deterring approach, but God himself inviting to the free use of that fruit which insureth immortality. In that pleasant abode there is no night, —the sun withdrawing not itself—rest without sleep, repose without peril, activity without exhaustion.

Now again we read of the city of God, lustrous with gold and precious stones, with walls, and gates,

and streets, and thrones, and temples, and worship. Enough to be assured that there is in reserve for every follower of Christ a state of absolute perfection, where the work of redemption finds its joyful completion. The pleasant occupation to which we are now invited is to rehearse the several facts which Revelation has communicated concerning that future condition of redeemed and restored humanity. We shall indulge in no conjectures; introduce no hypothesis, but confine ourselves most rigidly to the narration of those sober realities which the Redeemer of man has himself authenticated.

Redeemed man shall then attain the perfection of his nature — perfection absolute and entire. He will be made perfect in *body*. Paradise is not the abode of ethereal essences. The promise of redemption relates not to the disembodied spirit, but to our *humanity*, and this is composed of *body* and *spirit*. Christ, the God-man, ascended to the skies with a body. When he was upon the earth, he was once transfigured in person, his human form becoming invested with superhuman brightness, that he might reveal to the few disciples who were privileged to stand with him on Tabor, some glimpses of man's glorified personality. And the promise is that every redeemed man shall hereafter possess a body like unto Christ's glorious body. It is called a *spiritual* body. Not that it is intangible, impalpable, and invis-

ible, as spirit. But so refined is it from all grossness, endowed with such power and life, that no word could so well express its quality as that which God has chosen and employed — a *spiritual* body.

A body is essential to our personality. We have seen what skill the Almighty expended on its construction. We have endeavored to imagine what was its beauty when first it was fashioned by the Creator. We have seen as well what effects have been produced upon it by transgression. What deformities, what pains, what diseases, what infirmities, came in with sin. We have seen what marks and havoc are entailed upon the human body by the law of retribution. It is doomed to death and the grave. It was not the body which was the cause or occasion of sin; it was *man* who sinned, body and soul, one indivisible person; and it is to that personality, redeemed from sin and death by the Son of God, that the promise is made of future perfection and immortality. When the Redeemer assumed our nature — a body like our own — when he shared in its infirmities, when he bore it upward on his ascension, he gave a pledge that the *bodies* of those who believe in him should participate in his Redemption.

We broach no novel theory concerning the powers of that renovated and perfected body. We are assured that it will have no inordinate appetite, no law in its members warring against the law in the mind. It will

not depress or burden the spirit. Nor does this absence of qualities fully describe it. It has positive attributes. It is endowed with power, with honor, with strength, with incorruption, with glory. Imagine it not inert, the passive instrument of its spiritual tenant; for if there be enjoyment now in any sense, if the eye finds delight in objects of vision, if the ear experiences pleasure in sound, and the limbs in motion, think not that pleasure will be lessened when the glorified body shall enter upon that new abode which Christ hath prepared for the redeemed, with visions, and music, and activities, proportioned to its renovated and immortal powers.

If the Creator rejoiced over man when he fashioned him out of the dust, moulding his form, and vitalizing it with his own breath, how much more shall Christ be gladdened when attended by those whom he hath ransomed from death and the grave, and clothed with beauty, health, vigor, and immortality. The death of the body was a consequence of sin. A body that can not die is the gift of the Redeemer. Bear it gently, though it must be sorrowfully, yet meekly and hopefully, the body from which life has departed; bear it to its resting-place; this is not the defeat and frustration of the Redeemer's work, for that which you sow in the ground is the germ of immortal perfection. The resurrection of the dead is the promise not of nature but of Redemption.

The faculty of intelligence, of knowing and reasoning, was an original endowment of our nature. Sin entered, and the *mind* of man was dimmed and darkened. Ignorance and superstition have blurred and beclouded the human soul. The rays of truth, entering this dense and opaque medium, have been refracted. The whole tendency of ruined mind has been toward ignorance and debasement. Men like not to retain the knowledge of God and of truth in their minds. They will not come to the light. They love darkness rather than light. Such is the mournful verdict which inspiration has pronounced upon humanity — the image of God at first — in its apostate state. The Redeemer comes to restore this image, well-nigh effaced. He sheds light on the darkened mind; imparts to it a relish for knowledge, a taste for truth; and gives to man's intellectual being an ascendency over the earthly and sensual. This result of redemption is but partial and incomplete in the present life. The child of God sees through a glass darkly. The eye of the blind is opened, but it sees imperfectly — even men as trees walking. The mind, in its process of restoration, is perplexed by many consequences of the apostacy. Prejudices pervert the truth, and truth is acquired by the hardest — even by effort, by care, by reasoning, and by inference.

Out of this imperfect condition redeemed mind is to be recovered entirely. Something more than deliver-

ance from ignorance, from blankness and vacuity, is promised. Man, a living soul at the beginning, shall be God's perfected likeness at the end. Little short of intuitive knowledge appears to be promised in those words: *We shall know even as we are known.* Without pressing them beyond their truthful import, so much is certainly conveyed by the promise: the clear and honest intelligence of man shall answer unto the intelligence of God. There shall be no refraction, but a perfect reflection of the light and truth. The process of intellectual recovery which began when Christ applied his sovereign eye-salve, shall be perfected in that future state where the last film of darkness shall be removed, the last veil of ignorance withdrawn, and the ransomed mind shall see "face to face," in the immediate and intuitive perception of unmixed and unclouded truth.

Most of all, and greatest of all, man's moral nature is restored hereafter to an absolute perfection. It was here that defection began; not in man's reason, not in his body, but in his free-will. His affections have been perverted, his likings and dislikings have not been in accordance with what was right and good. We have studied that wonderful method by which God designs to recover man's alienated affections; not by wrath, not by menace, not by authority, not by fear—but by the expression of his own love in the life and death

of his Son. This is the method of man's change and recovery.

Restoration begins where began the malady. But there is no promise of its completion in this present life. It goes on, but it is not consummated. Various methods are employed by God for its advancement. Sometimes bitter medicines are needful for the cure; sometimes severe surgery and painful amputations. Affections become detached from objects to which they have clung with idolatry, by a friendly force. The Spirit of God applies its curative help. By little and little, by this method and by that, the enfeebled will becomes vitalized with new strength, and the new man is developed out of the old. The believer in Christ is redeemed, is regenerated, but he is not restored. Life has begun, and that is great; but it is not yet perfected, which is the greatest. Goodness in this life is the result of effort, and care, and vigilance. What is gained is retained with difficulty. The new contends against the old. That long strife at last will end in complete victory. The *will*, now inclined to evil, will be disposed only to good, and the soul at last is for ever delivered from the bondage of sin.

To say that redeemed man will be as holy in the second Paradise as was man in the first, seems to be but a faint expression of that great promise which pertains to the ultimate perfection of humanity. He shall be holy

as God is holy. Truly, literally, shall it be so. Hard may it be for you, disciple of Christ, even to conceive of such a result, amid the fears, struggles, and despondencies, of your probationary life. But nothing short of this would meet the wish or promise of the Redeemer. You must strive to rise up to the great idea, absolute holiness—duty without reluctance, obedience without defect, affection without reserve, gratitude without alloy, the conscious doing of what is right without any sense of imperfection. Judge not that the conversion and partial sanctification of man—great as is that achievement—is the full result which Christ contemplates in redemption. He turns not from that which he begins till it is amply and for ever completed. He intends that every one who believes on him shall hereafter be with him and like him, sharing in his own immaculate holiness, and resplendent as a star in his royal diadem.

I have not yet mentioned that special provision by which holiness in Paradise is distinguished from holiness in Eden—even the guaranty of the Almighty—which secures it from a second apostacy. This will be presented in its proper place and time; but, just now, let us receive the full impression of the revealed fact that the soul of man, redeemed from sin, born again by the will of God, here on earth, will, in the promised and prepared Paradise, become perfect as our Father in

heaven is perfect. We falter at the great conception. It seems like immodesty and presumption in us to aspire after it. But it is the calm, sober hope of our redeemed nature—likeness to Him who became like unto us—perfection of body, mind, and soul.

The next thing to be mentioned is, that the future *condition* of man will correspond precisely unto his *character*. This is never the case on the earth, even with the best of our species. The promise is conveyed in these words: "And there shall *be no more curse*."

The world in which we now are is under a curse, the shadow of which passes upon all its inhabitants. It marks our entrance into life, and our mode of exit from it. The evil of which we speak came in with transgression. There was no sign of it in the garden where man was originally placed. Nature had no agency with which to terrify and afflict, but all wherewith to bless and rejoice man in his innocence. Man sinned, and the displeasure of the Almighty followed, as thunder follows the lightning's flash. The curse was upon man, and upon the ground for his sake. The curse was upon woman: sorrow multiplied, and her own feet entering the precincts of death to receive the life of her offspring. The curse of death was upon them both. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The gospel of Christ has wrought wonderful changes in man's physical condition, and it is destined to achieve

yet many more; but, as long as we are in the world, no quality or degree of goodness will exempt us from the universal calamity which impends over our species. We are born in helplessness, live in sorrow, die in anguish, and are buried in shame. In regard to the true believer in Christ, this common curse is mitigated, but not removed. He has been taught to hope and smile amid tribulations, but tribulations are his. The spotless Son of God came under the curse himself, that he might lift it off from our sad and suffering nature, and restore those whom he redeems to an unmingled joy. He became subject unto death, that we might die no more. But that result of redemption is ultimate. The prospect of a mysterious dissolution of body and spirit makes a part of our present probationary experience, and, through fear of it, many, through all their lifetime, are subject to bondage. Nor is this strange. Death is a curse; and, though the restorative grace of God overrules the evil for a higher good, yet no promise, no hope, can render death itself any other than a terrible evil. It is the retribution of sin. Though the retributive law is attempered and modified by the introduction of mercy, it is not wholly suspended as yet. Excepting those natural and constituted penalties of sinful courses, Christian believers are subject to the same forms of death as other men. No promise exempts them from the physical pains of dissolution. The same cold prostra-

tion, the same convulsive spasms, the same acuteness of pain, the same pantings for breath, for them as for others. There is but one way for any to pass out of the world who have once entered into it.

Entirely and absolutely reversed will be the conditions of that future state to which the redeemed shall be translated. There the retributive consequences of sin will be more than mitigated — even removed and terminated for ever. For thus is it written: "THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE." — "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

For *the former things are passed away.* The last vestige of the curse disappears. Those evils, which piety itself could not escape in this present life — which are common to all in the world which sin invaded and cursed — are known no more, not even in shadow, in that world where redemption is complete. We die but once. Death once passed, our only concern with it is in the joyful recollection of deliverance from an evil which is never to be repeated. Neither shall they die any more. Not a tear is shed in the celestial Paradise. Life, with no abrupt or violent termination — life, with no age, no decay, no infirmity, and no end — *the life everlasting!* The last shadow of the curse passed

away, and humanity ransomed and restored, lifted up above the reach of all those necessities, burdens, griefs, sufferings, fears, which belong to this state of discipline, to that very life and blessedness of God which knows neither mixture, nor peril, nor change. Then, and not till then, will Christ be satisfied with the result of his great redemption. The greatest changes which the Redeemer accomplishes on earth, marvellous as they are, are only the partial fulfilment of his great purpose. Toward that ultimate issue all things are tending, and every benignant effect of the gospel in this life is but an index and pledge of those greater results which belong to the life which is to come.

We have only begun the mention of those elements of blessedness which describe the Paradise of the Redeemer. We must observe wherein it actually advances and improves upon that Paradise which once was upon the earth. God's ways are from the lower to the higher —from the less to the greater. Not only are there some ingredients in that future blessedness which are never known on earth, but special arrangements are provided for their continuance and perpetuity.

Enough, however, has been mentioned already to excite our gratitude in behalf of those who, redeemed by the grace of Christ, have been removed out of this world; and in behalf of ourselves also, that we may share in the hope of so great salvation. The Para-

dise of God is open to all who believe in the redemption of our Lord. Instead of cherubim with flaming sword, interdicting approach to that enclosure of blessedness, every being within it, walking amid its trees, and reposing in its security, He who prepared it, the Spirit and the Bride, together join in inviting and welcoming all to its eternal delight. As we can find no Paradise on earth, let us be sure to seek that Paradise which is in heaven!

XIII.

MAN'S ULTIMATE PERFECTION.

It is one advantage of the method we have pursued, of studying the great facts of Christian anthropology, in their consecutive order, that man's ultimate perfection, as restored by the Son of God, appears to be the fitting climax of that redemptive process which is in progress before our eyes. Having seen wherein our common nature has suffered injury and deflection, we have been able to comprehend the nature of that aid which has been supplied by the Redeemer. It only remains that this work of redemption should be carried on unto perfection, to give us the scriptural conception of that ultimate blessedness which is in reserve for recovered humanity. Heaven is not an arbitrary bestowal, but the result, the completion, and coronation of that which is begun on earth, through the grace of the Redeemer.

Nothing, as we believe, is more unproductive of good, than indiscriminate descriptions of the heavenly state, through the poetic faculties. One may gather up all the material images which describe that world of joy; his imagination may revel amid visions of gardens, and palaces, of green meadows, and golden streets, all forms of splendor, and beauty, and security, and contentment, yea, even of praise, and adoration, without obtaining one definite idea of what are the essential elements of that celestial blessedness. It is one of the rudiments of our religious belief, even now, that our happiness depends, not so much on our circumstances as our characters; not so much on what we have as what we are; not on what is around us as what is within us. Follow the same rule of judgment throughout an interminable existence. Tell us not altogether of the material magnificence of that city of God, that metropolis of the universe, which is to be the abode of the redeemed, but more of the elements which enter into its great joy, so that we may decide whether we have any affinity with its glorious delights. Address our imagination less, and our reason and moral affections more. Now, this is the peculiarity of inspired revelation on this subject. Herein it differs from that play of fancy, born of gorgeous Orientalism, which runs riot in the Koran of the Arabic impostor, when describing his imaginary Paradise.

Trespassing not one step beyond the limits of actual revelation, we mention as the next element of future blessedness, *sensible and joyful communion with God.*

When man is first introduced in the inspired records, living in Eden, and that Eden as yet unblighted, we find him in happy intercourse with his Maker. As the earth and sky seem to touch, in the breaking of the morning along the eastern horizon, so did God and man, actually meet and commingle in the morning of man's history. Without speculating as to the form and method of that communication, without pressing too far that language which describes the Creator as speaking to his image, walking in the garden with him, we feel assured that man's intercourse with his Maker was sensible, direct, and joyful. God was seen, known, and felt to be present, his existence not being inferred as now by a process of the reason. That intercourse was not only direct, immediate, and sensible, but it was a source of ineffable delight. Loving his Maker to the full extent of his capacities, man had nothing but confidence and gladness in his presence. Apostacy disturbed this intercourse, and man was afraid, and hid himself from his Creator.

To say that God withdrew himself henceforth from man, would convey a misconception, if the words were subject to a literal construction; for God's thoughts

were active on man's recovery. Nevertheless, the method of God's intercourse with man was suited to those altered relations which sin had induced. At length communication is re-established; but with a veiled face and intermediate symbols. Not even the most favored of our race, not the chosen shepherd of Horeb, into whose hands the tables of the law were committed, was permitted to see the face of God. Fear, as begotten of conscious guilt, was the regnant sentiment of the human soul. From the cleft of a rock man might catch a glimpse of the passing and receding glory of God. In the august precincts of the tabernacle, the high-priest, the one man who was the anointed representative of all other men — and death smote whomsoever beside him presumed upon that sanctity — saw the Shechinah, the burning splendor which symbolized the actual presence of the Almighty. At length God revealed himself again, nearer, closer than before, not in flame, not in whirlwind and tempest, not in descending chariots of fire, but in a human form. He is in actual contact with our own nature. He re-establishes intercourse with his creatures on terms which excite confidence and awaken love. He enters into man's home; sits at his table; and converses with him face to face. Withdrawing himself again, for a season, he sends his Spirit into man's heart, enkindles the sense

of adoption, communicates his own love, and enables the regenerated soul to say, "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Nevertheless, this sense of God's being and favor struggles against many opposing influences. We have not seen God at any time. If we love him, if we believe in him, we believe and we love him whom we have not seen.

Our faith and love are subject to manifold interruptions. The evidence of God's presence is much like the light which shines, now and then, through the crevices of the rifted clouds. The best intercourse of the most favored men with their Maker, in the transfigurations of devotion, is imperfect. It is unsatisfactory, and provokes hungerings and thirstings after some manifestation of God more direct and sensible. Meanwhile this process of spiritual reconciliation and recovery is going on, and the promise of redemption is, that man again shall see the face of his God. Now, partially restored, man sees through a glass darkly, but ultimately his intercourse with his Maker shall be immediate, uninterrupted, direct, and joyful. Through the mighty power of Him who assumed our nature, we shall be as truly reconciled to God, harmonized with him, and associated with him, as if the shadow of sin, and fear, and repulsion, had never passed upon the soul. One of the great promises of Scripture is, that the "taberna-

cle of God shall be with men, and he shall be their God, and they shall be his people." The promise is conveyed in symbolical language. As the ancient tabernacle was the place where in a special, nay, exclusive sense, God made a manifestation of himself, we are to understand, by the language here employed, that he will establish such a direct intercourse with men that they shall perceive and enjoy his immediate presence.

Of similar import is the promise concerning the new Jerusalem which is to come down from heaven, having the glory of God, in which is no temple, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof." Once there was a temple in which God revealed himself to devout worshippers. But it was a temple with a vail between man and his Maker — a manifestation of God, restricted, partial, and incomplete. Hereafter there shall be no such temple, no wall, no gate, no court, no separation, no vail, no restriction, no mystery, and no interdict; more than what the temple was to the Priest heaven shall be to the ransomed — who are all priests and kings unto God. No limitations of place, and mode, and form, shall obstruct the revelation of God's glory, but his children shall see his face, and he shall smile on them, and dwell with them for ever.

See his face? Actually, literally, certainly. They

shall see God. What do we intend when we speak of seeing objects with the eye, that most satisfactory of all our senses? The eye does not see; it is itself a curious apparatus which enables the intelligent spirit within to discern the images of objects without. Arrange an optical instrument in imitation of the lenses of the eye, and throw the images thus produced on a blank, dead wall. Does the wall see? It is the spiritual lodger within which receives the impression of those images, transmitted to it by means of this curious mechanism of the eye. *This* eye, at length, will be sealed in death. Films, darkness, decay, dust, will be the end of those optics, the beauty and fidelity of which no human skill can reconstruct. But of this we may be sure, in that ultimate perfection of the spiritual body, we shall have not less but more of that very delight and satisfaction which we now derive from the use of the eye. What limited objects are those which are painted on the retina of this small organ!

In the economy of redemption things advance from less to greater. Nothing good and useful in us will be dwarfed in the spiritual body. That also will have its media of communication. Confound not what is spiritual with the dim, the vague, and the shadowy. It is while in this body of clay, with a veil and burden of flesh, that we are subject to such a misconception. Hereafter we shall see God—see him as he is—see

him face to face. Not then, as now, shall we reason out the conviction of his existence, inferring the attributes of his nature from the attributes of his works; not then, as now, shall we believe in God by the power of faith in an invisible object: but the perception of his presence will be so sensible, immediate, and complete, that no word can so well express it as *sight*.

And this intercourse with God will be the source of infinite delight, because God himself will there be the object of supreme love. Love asks no greater pleasure than the presence of its object. "Brethren, we know not now what we shall be." Love for God is so imperfect, so inadequate, that in its very highest exercise it is now associated with a painful sense of defect and demerit. Conceive what it will be when, made perfect, it ejects fear; and, greater than all, when it outgrows the sense of shame, that shadow of sin, it shall live in utmost confidence, in immediate intercourse, with its object. So man had communion with God at the beginning, in Eden; so shall he again commune with him, in Paradise — seeing him, walking with him, resembling him, resting in his bosom. The sky and the earth touch again, and man once more is brought back to the love and vision of his God.

Nor is this ultimate perfection of humanity an inactive repose. Man's eternal sabbath is not a sleep.

Next to the removal of every curse, the perfection of body, soul, and spirit, and the actual vision of God, is *the joyful activity of man's renovated nature;* or, as it is prominently set forth among the many inspired promises pertaining to that future state, "His servants shall serve him."

It was thought not unworthy of mention by the Holy Ghost, among the many sources of delight which man enjoyed in primeval Eden, that he was placed in the garden to till and to keep it. Occupation was the pleasure of innocence. The exercise of his own faculties of body and mind was essential to his blessedness. Man was made for action, as streams are made to flow. He was God's image and likeness, and God is life and action, motion and power. Sin entered, and retribution changed *work* into *labor*. As man must needs expend and employ his vital strength, and, as he himself is deflected from the right way, that expenditure is difficult and toilsome. The curse doomed man to earn and eat his bread by the sweat of his brow. So many are the advantages of which we are all conscious in connection with industrious habits and constant occupation, that with difficulty we comprehend how that was ever a curse which seems now a positive blessing. Let us remember that we are living under a remedial and restorative system; that Christianity has immensely modified and changed man's con-

dition already; that the curse has been mitigated and lightened; and we have only to anticipate the promised time when there shall *be no more curse*, to satisfy ourselves what enjoyment will spring from the brisk and unwearied exercise of our immortal powers.

To understand what was meant by that curse which doomed man to sweat and labor, we must go beyond the genial light and benignant influences of the Christian redemption, where man is compelled to sustain a cheerless existence, plodding on like the beasts which perish, with little hope, little courage, and little reward. The Christian religion has done so much for *us*, that we forget the palpable fact that the immense majority of the human race, at this very hour, are doomed to drudgery and back-breaking labor for a bare subsistence. It is as though they were forced to grind in the prisonhouse of their great and cruel captor, and they groan, being burdened.

The redemption of Christ plants hope in the human soul, and, gradually ameliorating our condition, converts labor back again to work, lifts off the pressure which crowds and crushes, and gives free play to the unfettered faculties. Man redeemed, tastes the pleasure of occupation under the impulse of new motives; couples fervor of spirit with serving the Lord, industry with religion, and so, instead of groaning, he hums contentment at his work; and the more busy he is, from

religious motives, the more blessed he becomes. Carry out this idea to a consummated result; divest work of weariness and exhaustion; restore humanity from its inbred and inveterate malady of indolence; make occupation congenial and grateful, and let our recovered nature find its joy in the smooth working of all its varied faculties. So will it be hereafter. In this imperfect state we associate work—work in good causes and from good motives—even the whole matter of a religious living—too much with necessity and obligation; and we urge ourselves to effort where at last there will be the fullness of spontaneous life. *His servants shall serve him.* Not from compulsion, not reluctantly, not laboriously, not against opposing wishes and purposes, but joyfully, as the lark springs up and mounts to the gates of heaven, pouring out its gleesome song in a rapture of delight.

I stood at the bedside of a most intelligent Christian, waiting for her great change to come. She was full of joyful anticipation. "Oh," said she, "to '*run with willing feet* in the way of God's commandments,' what a gladsome promise is that!" It was a most discriminating perception of this very element of future blessedness—His servants shall serve him—with no drawing back, no urgency, no idea of necessity—moving and obeying because we must—but with cheerful alacrity, and with all the powers of the ransomed soul

flaming in one direction of unmixed, uncoerced, and unimpeded choice. The angels who do God's commandments are as flames of fire, alert and resplendent in their promptitude. Our daily prayer at last will be accomplished: we shall do the will of God, as it is now done in heaven. The spiritual body shall know no fatigue, and no necessity for recruiting its exhausted strength by sleep.

There are limits to action in this life. We can not carry even our religious occupations beyond a certain bound. Greeting the sabbath morning with gratitude and joy, and engaging in its praises and delights, when evening comes we find that even Christian adoration and well-doing can not exceed the limits of our nature; and the last thought which passes through our minds, ere sleep visits us, is of that world *where there is no night*—not any necessity for restorative rest, but one unwearied life.

It has been thought by some as quite a solecism when Baxter, in his immortal description of the saint's everlasting rest, called it an *active rest.* Undoubtedly the idea present to his mind was precisely this: that man will not rest in heaven as a stone rests on the earth; but, exempted from all which is disagreeable and irksome, all that is coerced and compulsory, he shall find his highest satisfaction in flights of spontaneous obedience:—

"Rest is not quitting
The busy career;
Rest is the fitting
Of self to its sphere

"'Tis the brook's motion,
Clear without strife—
Fleeing to ocean
After its life.

"'Tis loving and serving
The Greatest and Best;
'Tis onward—unswerving—
And this is true rest!"

What forms of service await restored humanity—what occupations shall furnish occasion for its renovated activity—to what labor of love, what ministrations of mercy, what vigorous work, or sweet grace, the redeemed shall be invited—we may not conjecture; but surely He who gives us so much to do on earth, and so much pleasure in doing it, will not fail, amid the relations of all worlds and all beings, in furnishing to man, restored to his loyalty, abundant occupation:

"For every power finds sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

Belonging to that ultimate issue and completion of redemption, there will be a public *recognition* and *promotion* of all who share in its benefits. This is expressed in the promise—"*His name shall be in their foreheads.*" If the language be tropical, it is easy of interpretation. On the fore-front of his mitre, on the

surface of a blazing diamond, the high-priest wore the ineffable name of JEHOVAH. In the joyful worship of the skies, every redeemed man shall be distinguished as such. Here he wears the name of Christ in his heart. In this living tablet it dwells by faith. Yet is he often disturbed with doubts and apprehensions relative to his own character. With great concern and solicitude does he ponder the question whether he is one of those who will stand with the Redeemer on Mount Zion above. Restoration being incomplete as yet, he is subject to many painful uncertainties concerning himself, like one in process of recovery from a long and painful illness, who is sensible of much weakness, and subject to many depressions. At last, when restoration is complete, these doubts shall be solved, and these fears dissipated for ever. The name of the Redeemer shall be in his forehead, clear and bright as the star in the morning sky; and man, redeemed and restored, stands before the universe the acknowledged child of God, the visible crown and success of redemption.

Often are we mistaken here in our judgment of others. The true followers of the Redeemer are frequently overlooked and unknown, while others are exalted into observation by a false promotion. Every mistake will be rectified in that ultimate issue, when righteous judgment shall prevail, and the name of the Lamb shall flame on the brow of every redeemed man. The Son

of God has not expended so much for waste. Esteeming those he redeems as his jewels, the regalia of his kingdom, he will not suffer them to be lost, but will gather them up, exhibit and acknowledge them, as the results, honors, and rewards, with which his own soul is satisfied. Redemption will not then appear the ambiguous and incomplete thing which it sometimes seems to our present purblind vision; but in its manifested triumphs, its complete consummation — man lifted up from every depression, promoted out of every obscurity, rescued from every shame — the image of God as at the beginning — God's own resplendent child and heir!

XIV.

THE PERFECTED RESULT OF REDEMPTION.

As one who has been long and laboriously travelling along miry roads, perplexed with gulleys and stones, through dark woods, disagreeable fens and marshes, overspread by dense and unwholesome fogs, at length reaches the smooth top of a hill, where he finds the air clear and tonic, the sky without a cloud, every obstruction left behind, and the landscape stretching away in bright and beautiful perspective — so we, who have been studying the great facts of man's moral history — his temptation and his fall, the failure of all attempts at self-recuperation, the griefs which depress him, the retributions which overtake him, the death through which he must pass, the vicarious sorrows by which he was redeemed, and all the varied conflicts and difficulties of his gradual restoration — are now brought to a "great and high mountain," where we behold man's redemp-

tion complete, himself mingling with the crowd of heavenly worshippers, and a partaker of all the joys and honors of his Father's kingdom.

It is no Icarian wing of imagination to which we intrust ourselves for an adventurous flight. Divine revelation is our guide, and *religious faith* with steadfast and unfaltering strength shall bear us up to the "Mount Zion which is above." It has well been observed: "If meditation of the future and invisible world be liable to any abuse, or may be likely to degenerate into insipid or presumptuous conceits, it is only when the first principles of the gospel are lost sight of. The contemplatist goes astray when he forgets himself and his guide—when he muses idly of heaven, as if there had been no transgression and were no redemption. And the difficulty also as well as the hazard of such attempts to rise above the present scene, or to penetrate the invisible world, is enhanced, or is indeed rendered insuperable, when our actual position as those who have been *restored* is not kept in mind; but, on the contrary, is obviated while we look to Him who, as Precursor, has trodden all the path of existence, even from the low starting-point of humanity, through death, to the upper region of perpetual pleasure."*

The revelation of the Christian mystery, "God mani-

* Isaac Taylor.

fest in the flesh" as our Redeemer — this, and nothing but this, gives impulse, substance, hope, and reason, to the meditations of the heavenly state. Certainly it is in the Christian revelation that we see that door opened in heaven through which we may behold the throne of our Maker, and man bending with angels in joyful adoration.

The place where we are now to take our stand of observation is far beyond the mount of Olives, Gethsemane, and Calvary. Far away is it beyond death — ay, beyond the resurrection, and beyond the judgment. The graves are *behind* and not *before* us. Long ago have these been despoiled, and forced to give up their treasures. The conflagration of the world, the dissolving of the elements, are events which have passed. All that is meant by the new heavens and the new earth, whatever they are, has actually come. All that Christian men have anticipated, oftentimes with a sort of incredulous and bewildered apprehension, has emerged from the region of faith into actual vision. The mysteries of Christian belief have passed out from clouds and reserve into the full sunshine of unobstructed comprehension. Man, as we now shall see him, in that farthest point of observation to which inspiration carries our power of vision, is not the form now so familiar to our eyes, crippled, deformed, diseased, bent, clad in rags, with face soiled by dust, and sweat, and tears; not the

form as last we saw it when going from the earth, cold, pallid, lifeless, bound about with grave-clothes: it is an ethereal form — a glorious body — a form of strength, and grace, and light — clothed in honor and immortality: —

> "Creature all grandeur, son of truth and light,
> Up from the dust! the last great day is bright —
> Bright on the Holy Mountain, round the throne —
> Bright where in borrowed light the far stars shone!
> Look down: the depths are bright; and hear them cry —
> 'Light!' — 'Light!' Look up: 'tis rushing down from high!
> Regions on regions — far away they shine;
> 'Tis light ineffable, 'tis light divine —
> Immortal light, and life for evermore!"

Lord Bolingbroke was accustomed to say, in the way of caricaturing the Christian representation of the heavenly world, that the prospect of an endless singing of hymns, so far from being an occasion of joyful anticipation, was only a weariness and disgust. One can not but be grieved at the mistakes which occurred in the early education of this distinguished man. We have no doubt that irradicable prejudices against the Christian religion were excited in his mind by certain forms of well-intended but indiscreet action of pious relatives. The wonder is, that his adult reason — and certainly it was of no ordinary character — should have confounded tropical language with literal representation, to such a degree as actually to lose sight of the substantial joy of the heavenly life in a dislike of the

figurative and extrinsic form in which it is described. With little taste for religious worship himself, it is not strange that he distasted the heavenly joy which is symbolized in the form of gladsome adoration. He should not have forgotten that there were those who possessed other and different tastes. He should have remembered that there were those among men who associated nothing displeasing or irksome with the acts of religious worship.

The author of the eighty-fourth psalm had none but joyful associations with that sabbath service. As on that day of gladness the inhabitants of city and country flocked together to the courts of the Lord, within the gates of the Holy City, young and old coming up from the valleys of the vine and the olive—from strength to strength, the confluent tribes receiving fresh recruits at the opening of every glen, and the descent of every hill—into their glorious temple, and there, with voices and with instruments, pouring out the swelling chorus amid all forms of jubilation, be assured that to all who joined in that service the world could present no other images or symbols of equal gladness.

It is *gladness* which is portrayed to us in the forms of celestial worship. The reality set forth by this representation is fullness of joy. It is pleasure, pleasure pure, pleasure for evermore, which is described as

the regnant emotion of the heavenly world. *Praise* is the expression of delight. In this imperfect state we discipline ourselves to look upon pleasure with suspicion and distrust; because we have discovered that there are so many pleasures which mislead us, syren voices which allure to mischief and disappointment. Never should we lose sight, however, of the truth, that pleasure, positive pleasure, is the true law and ultimate object of our existence. We were made for *enjoyment*.

Restraint, negation, reserve, do not define the law of our being. Requisite are they, essentially requisite now that we have gone astray from true happiness; but when the right way has been re-entered, and the right objects have been chosen, then shall we find rivers of pleasure and fullness of joy. Redemption restores and more than restores that which was the chief end of our being—enjoyment, positive enjoyment.

The mediation of Christ reaches its climax in irrepressible songs. Self-restraint, self-subjection, under the necessities of confession and humiliation, are becoming our present imperfect condition, but they will be lost for ever, when our restoration is complete. Every image which denotes the purest joy is introduced into this description of the ultimate blessedness of the redeemed. They are clad in white, the wedding garments of a great festivity. Music is the natural utterance of their delight. Nor is this a strained and artif-

cial expression. It is full-toned chorus; it is hearty praise; it is jubilant adoration. There is waving of incense from golden censers. There is the lifting up of triumphant palms. There is the casting of golden crowns at the feet of the enthroned. There is "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." And the song of multitudes, whom no man can number, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, is as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and as that doxology of the Redeemer waxes louder and fuller, the very pillars and arches of heaven are tremulous with joy. Divested of all that is tropical and symbolical in form, the one idea conveyed to us is, that the climacteric of redemption is *full*, *irrepressible*, *eternal joy*. A religion which falls short of positive and unfailing pleasure, as the ultimate law of life, can not meet the necessities of humanity.

Redemption is an advance on creation. It more than regains what was lost, more than restores what was original. The burden of that heavenly song is *salvation*, *blessing*, and *thanksgiving*. The second Paradise is better than Eden. The joy of man redeemed, restored, and perfected, is greater than that of man in the glory of his innocence.

There was a happy home, the abode of plenty, and love, and confidence, and joy. Temptation invaded it.

and the young son was seduced into extravagance, dissipation, and disobedience. He leaves his father's house, and abandons himself to the vilest company, and the worst courses. There is sorrow in that desolate home. The afflicted father sits silent and drooping at his own hearth; for his son is worse than dead to him — lost in character, lost to himself, and lost to hope. The vagrant boy at length reaches the result of his folly and guilt. He is reduced to beggary, shame, and famine. He is far from home. He is with strangers who treat him as if he never had a home. Do no thoughts of that loved spot he had forsaken, and of those loved ones whom he has injured, ever tug at his heart-strings? He comes to himself— wakes from his dream of madness, repents before God, impeaches himself for folly and sin, and resolves to return to his injured father. He can not think of being reinstated in his place as a son, but would be content with the lowest place as a servant. Penitent, doubtful, ashamed, heart-broken, he comes in sight of his childhood's home; and his father's love was quicker than his own confession; ere he could speak, his father has caught him in his arms, pressed him to his heart, kissed him, forgiven him, and with ineffable pity and love, welcomed him back to safety. There was music, there was feasting, there was dancing, everything which could express the joy which was felt in recover-

ing him who was counted as lost and as dead. It were hard for us to tell which of the twain was the happier, that loving father or the forgiven son. Were not the tears which streamed that night upon the pillow of that penitent boy, warm, and sweet, and blessed? We can not but think that some emotion of shame always lingered amid his gratitude, to give it a tinge of sadness —but imagine that love had deepened, and strengthened to such a degree in the lapse of years, that it outmastered all lesser emotions, would not the enjoyment of that restored son be enhanced through gratitude for his recovery?

The love of restored man is to be perfect. It will outlive the sense of shame. But gratitude is a new element in its life. Joy on being recovered out of shame, and sin, and misery, and death, is its distinctive quality. Salvation is the burden of its song. Thanksgiving is the key-note of its music. The rejoicing of heaven is more and greater than rejoicing at creation. It is a new song which is chanted by the redeemed.

Another element of that celestial joy, giving it a higher tone than that of the first Paradise on earth, is its *promised perpetuity*. No such quality belonged to the innocence of man's first probation. The happiness of man in Eden was suspended upon a contingency. It would continue so long as his obedience continued. No such uncertainties pertain to the final issue of redemp-

tion. Man in Eden stood in obedience, stood in himself, the issues of his high probation being suspended on his own free will. But man redeemed and restored, stands in Jesus Christ, in grace, in covenant, in promises, and so in fearless and eternal *security*. He is removed from the region of conditions, contingencies, and peradventures, to share in the changeless life of his divine Redeemer. This idea is conveyed to us, throughout the New Testament, in language and images of the utmost strength. "Because I live," said Christ, "ye shall live also." He bears the august titles of "Lord of life," the "Prince of life," "the *Life*" itself, and the life and joy of those he ransoms are as secure, and changeless, and endless, as his own.

We wonder why sin was ever permitted to invade a world under the government of omnipotent love. That wonder is lessened when we learn the immense gain and good which are to be secured by that grace which overrules evil for its own shame and defeat. Redemption solves the mystery and justifies the permitted events of human history. That redemption complete, there will be no second apostacy. The perpetuity of restored humanity is guarantied by a special decree of the Almighty. No tempter will be permitted to enter the celestial Paradise. No serpent lurks beneath the trees which skirt the river of life. The tenure by which they who are redeemed from among men hold their

heavenly inheritance differs even from that which keeps the holy angels in their high estate. Well may they exult who come home to the heavenly Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. Members of his body who sitteth upon the throne, oft as they turn a grateful eye to him they are reminded of the perpetuity of their new life. Long as Christ lives they shall live *with* him, and *in* him. No cloud obscures the prospects of futurity. The life which Christ restores is secured beyond the reach of power, and accident, and apostacy, and peril. It is a life of joy, without the possibility of falling away, and without an end; for the well-spring of it is not our personal obedience, but the life of the Redeemer, the very life of God.

It has not escaped the notice of the reader, as a part of the inspired description of that future state, that it is enjoyed by a *multitude whom no man can number*. A fact so prominently set forth in revelation should not be pretermitted in our regard. Because our Lord, with supernatural sagacity, met the inquiry of a frivolous man, as to the number of the saved, with a response which turned his thoughts to his personal perils and necessities, let us not conclude that all knowledge concerning the number of the ransomed is itself unimportant. A weighty consideration is it to those who feel it to be no small part of the difficulty against which faith is struggling, that believers in Christ are at present in a fear-

ful minority; an inspiriting thought is it to be assured that this proportion ultimately will be reversed. The worship of the skies will not be chanted in solo strains, but by an innumerable multitude out of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues. The paths which now lead to the city of God have travellers few and scattered; but in that celestial metropolis where they all converge, the concourse will exceed all power of computation; more than the sands of the seashore—more for numbers than the stars of the firmament—more than drops of the morning dew.

Never indulge the apprehension in this unfinished state that redemption will prove a failure, or that you are committed to an illusion which will ultimately make you ashamed. The soul of the Infinite will not be satisfied with paucity of numbers. The large majority of the human species die in infancy. They are simply born, and die. They scarcely touch our earth ere they are removed. This profusion of life is not *waste*, but *economy*, for they all live unto God. They enter the gates of being in connection with depressed and dying humanity, that they may enter the gates of life, through the grace of the Redeemer. We shall be slow to doubt that this is the Christian solution of that otherwise inexplicable problem of nature—the untimely death of the great majority of our race: it is not *death*, but *salvation.*

The guests will not be wanting at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Those who measure their own success by the numbers with which they are associated, will have no reason to be ashamed at that assemblage of the ransomed. Such a gathering was never before since the foundations of the earth were laid: the whole family of the redeemed, from all the generations and tribes, and centuries of time. All ages, all varieties, all forms of humanity, will be there — the general assembly of the church of the first-born who are written in heaven. If we might select even now a congress of characters, such as we have known, and such as we have read of; if out of all the earth we might gather them together, and listen to their wisdom, and share in their confidence, and commune with their love; it were a privilege which should exceed the powers of our imagination: but the positive promises of Christ in regard to the perfected results of his redemption are that the spirits of the just made perfect shall be congregated together hereafter as never they were before — all the redeemed, all the perfected, in social harmony and joy. Whatever shame there may be that day in the universe, it will not be found among any attached to that "innumerable company."

In every description which inspiration has given us of that heavenly state, mention is made of angels and other orders of beings, who, not partakers of our nature,

are nevertheless to be sharers of our gratitude, and praises, and joy. They, too, are represented as bowing and singing before the throne of the Lamb. The song of the redeemed is indeed a *new* song to angels who have never sinned; yet they join in it for ever and ever. How can this be explained? It is something more than the sympathy of pure goodness with the gladness of others. Indeed, it gleams on us, at times, as a great wonder, how angels who shouted for joy at the world's creation — who were eminent in wisdom, and mighty in strength, before man was formed out of the dust — could ever be made to harmonize with humanity on any other terms than pity and condescension. Like all other problems and mysteries, this is solved by *redemption*, and by this only.

The Being by whom man is redeemed and restored is higher than the angels. He took not on him their nature, for his condescension reached even to those whom he would save. He took upon himself *our* nature. He became a veritable man. Herein he crowned man with honor and glory. He lifted up humanity, by this divine alliance, so as never it was promoted in the mere gradations of being. By this act, man is made greater than the angels. What, "know ye not that ye shall judge angels?" Is not humanity enthroned in the person of the Judge? Those mysterious beings whom the Apocalypse describes in juxtaposition with

the throne of the Almighty, with face of eagle and lion, have they not also one face of a *man?*

That great sweep and circuit of Christ's condescension, does it not encircle and include the angels? Could the eldest, wisest, greatest of the heavenly hierarchy, pass by a redeemed man, or treat him with reserve, or otherwise than with honor and love, without putting a slight upon Him who sitteth on the throne? That angel who was sent to announce to the Virgin Mary the high honor to be conferred on her, the mother of Christ, will never look with cold condescension or disdain on any human infant in heaven, since the Highest himself was once a babe in Bethlehem. The shining ones who were seen on the morning of the resurrection, sitting in the vacant tomb of Christ, the one at the head and the other at the foot, where his body was laid, will never deem it beneath their rank and greatness to associate with those who pass through the shame and darkness of death to the skies, seeing that He whom they worship became a man, and himself was once the tenant of the sepulchre. A partaker of our nature, he is not ashamed to call us brethren. And this is the fact which explains how all who are in heaven and all who are on earth may be gathered together in one, through the all-embracing condescension of the Incarnate. The divine stooping far below them—the human lifted up far above them—the angels, who never have sinned,

and so never were redeemed, catch the key-note of a new anthem, and bear up with their strong voices the common praise of the One Redeemer. It is not true at all that redemption is a provincial measure. Even if we knew that this was the only world in the creation of God which is blighted by sin and restored by the Redeemer, this act of redemption is not local and territorial, for the *incarnation* of the Son of God is an act which comprehends and includes all intermediate orders of beings in its mighty embrace.

And this, by a most natural transition, leads us to notice that Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of men, is the central object in that world of adoration and joy. As, so to speak, he is everywhere represented as the acting Divinity of this world, so, when this world's affairs are terminated and adjudicated, he will be the object of universal praise, and gratitude, and love. When we speak of this great mystery of our faith, "God manifest in the flesh," we ask no man to bring it down to our comprehension by an exact analysis. We leave it where the Scriptures leave it — a mystery still. But this is plain and luminous. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer of the world, is the Being whom glorified men and angels *adore*. When first revealed to our faith, he was a babe in Bethlehem. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He seemed the lowliest of men — without a pillow for his head, familiar with hun-

ger, thirst, and neglect. He seemed to be passive and helpless in the hands of men who put him to death. Amid the memories of what he was in his humiliation, lose not sight of what he is in the glories of his exaltation. He is seated on a throne of majesty. The myriads redeemed by his blood encircle his throne with praises and adorations. They but strain their vision to little advantage who study to demonstrate the divinity of our Lord out of isolated texts, forgetful of the revealed issue and climacteric of redemption.

Away beyond the shadows and mysteries of time—away beyond the final judgment—we see a *throne*, and we hear the voice of many angels round about the throne; and the beasts and the elders, those mysterious representatives of the heavenly hierarchy, saying with a loud voice: "'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!'"

In this shadowy state of mortal life, unbelief is for ever crowding redemption into a corner—conceiving it to be the faith of a few people, the concern of sabbath days, the mere comfort of the sick and the dying: but

in the illumination of eternity, redemption will be seen as the great end and unity of all things human, the key of history, the harmony of events, the beginning and the ending of this world's life. Then shall we attach new meaning to the august titles of our Lord — the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the King of kings and Lord of lords — for *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever! Amen.

"Rise, crowned with light, imperial Salem, rise!
Exalt thy tow'ry head, and lift thine eyes!
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;
See future sons and daughters yet unborn,
In crowding ranks, on every side arise,
Demanding life, impatient of the skies!
See barb'rous nations at thy gates attend,
Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend!
See thy bright altars thronged with prostrate kings,
And heaped with products of Sabean springs!
For thee Idume's spicy forests blow,
And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow
See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,
And break upon thee in a flood of day!
No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;
But lost, dissolved in thy superior rays,
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze,
O'erflow thy courts: the LIGHT HIMSELF shall shine
Revealed, and God's eternal day be thine!
The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay;
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away:
But fixed *His* word, *his* saving power remains —
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own MESSIAH REIGNS!"

So redemption advances to its grand climacteric. Such will be the redeemed church—the body and the bride of Christ—on earth and in heaven. Our place to-day is remote, in the visible ranks of that long procession which follows the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; but the whole body is ever in motion, and if indeed we are in that train of faith and love, we shall be advanced, farther and farther, in the revolutions of time and Providence, till we actually enter within the gates, and stand before the throne! We know not, now, what we shall be! Lamb of God! may we believe, love, and follow thee, on earth—that we may see, love, and adore thee, in heaven!

XV.

HOW IS ULTIMATE PERFECTION TO BE ATTAINED?

It were not enough to describe what man will be when restored and perfected; not enough to know that there is a Paradise of blessedness and security, into which all who are redeemed from among men shall be admitted as their perpetual home: we would know, for a certainty, if we can, what are the terms and conditions on which an entrance there may be secured; what is the path which conducts thither; and whether we ourselves are actually walking in that road which will bring us to the kingdom of heaven. Are there to be no discriminations among men? Are the human race, without regard to individual character, to be borne on to an indefinite perfectibility by an irresistible necessity? Are men, and all men, to be saved, just as they are born, without choice or responsibility of their own? or are some definite forms of activity on our part indis-

pensable to our personal salvation? It were only to sharpen the sting of a future disappointment to describe the heavenly Paradise, if we do not actually enter the path which leads to its blessedness.

Visiting the country in early summer — the season of freshness, and growth, and exuberant life — two things impress us much. The one is the *profusion* and *affluence* of those provisions which the God of Nature has made for the well-being of his creatures. *Bread enough and to spare* is inscribed all over our Father's house. What an infinity of blossoms, above all that are needed! what an infinity of fruits, above all that ever will be used! *Light* is not meted out like an artificial illumination, so much consumption for so many who use it: it is poured all over the earth with illimitable profusion — over the rocks and woods, where no man liveth; all over the sea, where no man roameth. Who can measure the waters? There is no fear that man ever will exhaust their abundance. The springs are full and flowing among the rocks; the brooks running through the meadows; the large rivers rolling their magnificence to the sea; the great lakes lifting up their reservoirs of abundance; and the dew and the rain defying and baffling all powers of computation. The concave of the skies, how vast! — large enough for a canopy over all the earth. And the air which is treasured

within it, for the sustenance of life, is not barely sufficient for so many, and for so long: it seems to laugh at the idea of stint or measurement. With wings laden with perfume, it flies away to kiss the hills, fan the tree-tops, and play with the ocean — encircling the globe, and coming back, as if it could not possibly exhaust its exuberant strength and life. The works of God are distinguished by this abundance, this immense profusion, this infinity.

The other thought with which one is deeply impressed is, the *silence* of God in Nature. I do not mean that sweet tranquillity which is so refreshing to a fevered spirit going from city crowds and noise to rural stillness. Neither is it meant that Nature is voiceless and incommunicative — for how many utterances has she, which are kind and gentle! There is an expression in the face of flowers; some distinctive lesson is written on the petals of each: and the green grass, as it gracefully bends its head to welcome you, repeats great moral truths, which were not unworthy the lips of our Lord: and the birds have a voice which is wiser than man's — for they eat, and render thanks in a song; having neither care, nor barn, nor storehouse, yet glad and gleesome always under the providence of their Father and ours. The day and the night, the morning and the evening, the land and the ocean, all have a speech for him who will listen. We

mean something more than this. As the works of God seem to bring you near to God, you wonder why it is that God himself does not speak to you, directly and audibly. He has, in a certain sense, spoken to us in his word. He speaks to us in his works — in his providence. Why does he not speak to us himself, and immediately? One word from him, how many doubts it would solve, how many perplexities remove, how many mysteries it would clarify! You go out into a solitary wood, on the top of a hill, or by the side of the sea, and think of Moses on Horeb, of Elijah beneath the juniper-tree, of John on sea-girt Patmos; and, ere you are aware, you have almost formed and uttered a prayer that God would speak to you, and reveal himself to you, as to man in olden times. But there is no response. It is the wind which touches your cheek, and nothing more; that floating form of dazzling white in the deep-blue sky is not an angel, but cloud — nothing but cloud: and you wonder, and are still — wonder, and are full of awe, because God is so silent and reserved.

Now, it is this last-named fact — to speak of this first in order — which seems to accord perfectly with the close and climax of revelation. In every way, God appears to put honor on his own written word. This is constructed after a visible method. It has a beginning, a substance, and an end. This ending of revela-

tion is most befitting and instructive. As it is in keeping with all the parts which precede, so is it a proper consummation and climacteric. The whole of the last chapter of the Scriptures seems to be designed to make this very impression — that the one great revelation from God is *finished.* One there is; this is all-sufficient, and this will not be repeated nor enlarged. No supplement, no appendix, will ever be needed or added. God has spoken, after his own method, once for all, and he will speak no more. Revelation is complete, and it is ended — the Book is closed and sealed! Still and silent are the heavens now for evermore. If men would know the mind of God, they must consult his revealed word. Whether they will remain holy or unholy, righteous or filthy, depends upon the mode in which they are affected toward that one, finished, all-sufficient revelation, which God has given to the world. Men may ask for a sign, and no sign shall be given to them, beyond what they have already. They wish that God would speak to them, though it were but a word; and the *silence* of the heavens assures them most impressively that all knowledge and all salvation are in that one system of redemption which is disclosed in the inspired volume.

Concerning this method of redemption, in which man's highest well-being is involved, we gather from the same closing passage of the New Testament that it is adequate, and more than adequate, for all mankind. Here,

again, the analogies of Nature come in to illustrate and confirm. All the arrangements of Divine Providence for human welfare are on a scale of immense munificence. That profusion and superabundance which characterize the supplies which God has made for our natural wants foreshadow the immeasurable quality of that redemption which provides for the well-being of man's higher nature. The light, the air, the water, the rain, the dew, the rivers, and the ocean, are the symbols which describe the boundless and universal fullness of that salvation which is by Jesus Christ. There are those, indeed, who theoretically, not practically, judge otherwise concerning the extent and range of that provision by which men are redeemed and restored. They measure its length and breadth as corresponding precisely and exactly with the numerical necessities of those who avail themselves of its provisions. They speak of the waste and useless expenditure which would exist on any other method or scale of judgment. Why not complain of waste and prodigality in the provisions of Nature? Why is so much of Heaven's pure and effulgent light poured down on barren rocks and trackless deserts? Why so much of sweet and wholesome water which findeth its way to the sea, whereof neither man, nor beast, nor bird, ever has tasted? And why such an infinitude of air, beyond the use and capacity of all God's creatures? With what propriety, besides,

can we speak of waste in reference to a moral expedient, which was designed to produce a moral effect? Better attempt to compress the magnificence of the firmament into the dimensions of a tent to dwell in, than subject the redemption of Jesus Christ, the grandest act and achievement in the universe, within our narrow conceptions of wants, and capacities, and numbers, and extension! God's own language is better than our small-minded speculations.

The closing chapter of Revelation is indeed befitting the grandeur of the preceding disclosures. When the city of God has been described, as by the diamond pen of an angel, all its twelve gates are thrown open wide, and from each proceedeth voices of invitation and welcome. When faith, and admiration, and joy, are carried to the utmost height by a disclosure of that celestial life which is the ultimate issue of redemption, the word which resounds the loudest, the longest, the fullest, is "*Come.*" The Spirit utters it, and the Bride echoes it. The Lord in heaven and his church on earth proclaim the same welcome. It is addressed to every man who is athirst. The welcome is to every one who heareth—to every one who will take of the waters of life. *His* they are, and his freely. This proclamation is not made by man, who justifies its indiscriminate offer on the ground of his own ignorance of the individuals who may accept it: it is made by God himself, in his

own word, with a full knowledge of the reception which it will meet from all; and who shall impute insincerity to the Most High in offering to all what was insufficient for all — especially as revelation assures us that it is the acceptance or rejection of this proffered relief which describes our present probation, and will decide our future destiny, at the first and last assemblage of the whole world?

The great and glorious truth, then, which breaks upon us is, that the restorative resources of the gospel are adequate for us all. They are commensurate with the evils they would remove. Indeed, they exceed them, and superabound above and beyond them all. A great thing, I say, is this to break in upon a mind bewildered and perplexed by human dogmas — the simple truth that the redemption which is by Jesus Christ is designed for us all, equal for us all, and, if we will, available for us all. There is no reserve, and no partiality, in these offers of eternal salvation. The Paradise of God is open to our entrance. Citizenship in the New Jerusalem is offered for our acceptance.

If, for any reason, we do not share in the honor and glory which await our renovated nature, that reason, be assured, will not be that the act and offer of the Redeemer were insufficient for our advantage. This is the first truth of the gospel, it is the very substance and body of the gospel, that the promises of redemption

are without stint, and beyond all measurement; that they are higher than the heavens, larger than the earth, broader than the sea, and more free and abundant than the flowings of the air. If any spot darkens the face of this sun, if any clouds gather over its disc, let them all be swept away, and take into your mind this gospel truth, that the invitations and welcomings of Jesus Christ, in the closing up of revelation, are as large, and liberal, and munificent, as our own necessities could suggest, or the fullness of God supply.

God has, then, provided all the materials for our highest well-being. In the arrangements of Nature he has most bountifully provided for our physical welfare. The same affluence and profusion are for our spiritual nature; and all this without our aid, and independent of our prayer, or choice, or counsel. Where wast thou when God laid the foundation of the earth, and spread out the heavens like a curtain, and what hadst thou to do with the eternal purpose and plan of redemption? All the materials essential to our well-being in both worlds, for the body, the mind, and the soul, for time and for eternity, God has provided, by his own unassisted and unmodified power, in that region of his working which is far above the reach of our own will and effort. But when we come to consider the method by which we are to avail ourselves of all this profusion of good, we are immediately brought in contact with certain terms and

conditions in accordance with which our actions must be adjusted. However munificent the provisionary arrangements of God, our personal well-being is never secured save as we bring ourselves into normal relations thereto. We must ourselves comply with the nature of the good to be conferred, or we shall never be benefited by it at all. What though the light of the sun shine broadly and resplendently over the whole earth, if one blind his eyes, shut them, screen them, how can he see? The light is of no advantage to him if he will not open his eyes to behold it. The birds are fed by Providence, though they sow not, neither do they gather into barns; and the lilies are clad in glory, even though they toil not, neither do they spin; but the well-being of man is never attained except he brings himself into harmony with all the conditions of the divine bestowal. Sowing and reaping, toiling and gathering, *are* conditions with man, if not with birds and lilies. Withhold these, and man never reaches that state of physical well-being which was designed for him. He does not comply with those terms which are inseparable from the blessing. The sun may shine and the rain may fall, spring and summer through, and all the wealth of air and soil be bestowed munificently, but if man will not hold the plough, nor sow the seed, nor work at all, he will reap small advantage from the willing liberality of God.

Precisely so is it in regard to God's spiritual munificence. If we should say that there were terms and conditions connected therewith, we might startle some who rejoice most of all in this, that the gospel is a gratuity, without money and without price. So, indeed, it is, with no meritorious conditions by which its benefits may be claimed and purchased. Nevertheless, there are conditions of our own nature which must be complied with before we can adjust ourselves to the reception of the gospel itself. The eye must be opened, or the light can not be received. The hand must be extended, or the gift will not be grasped. The mind must believe, or redemption never will be secured. Our own choice and action must coincide with God's liberality, or we shall reap no benefit from all the materials which his infinite bounty has prepared.

Verily, there are discriminations among men — differences of their own creating. We read of some who will not come to the light, though that light flood the sky and earth. Of some who will not come to the feast, though it is spread with an amplitude such as no other feast ever saw; who are inventive of excuses, even though the invitations are urgent, and oft-repeated. Indeed, men are not born into the kingdom of God involuntarily and passively as they are born into the world. It is by no means certain that all men *will* be saved because God's goodness is so immense that

all *may* be saved, for the Redeemer himself, though he invites the world, the whole world, to *come*, grieves over some because they will not come unto him that they may have life. Our highest well-being, therefore, is not made certain, until we adjust ourselves into harmony with all the conditions which are made essential as much by our own constitution as by the nature of redemption itself.

What are the terms? What is essential, on our part, to securing all the benefits of this ample and illimitable redemption? Whatever is implied in this act of *coming*. The Spirit and the Bride say come. Whoever is athirst is invited to come. Whosoever will is welcomed to take the water of life freely. These are plainly tropical expressions. Nevertheless, whatever is implied in the act of coming, and taking of the water of life, is indispensable if we would avail ourselves of the affluent provisions. These are the very least and lowest conditions which can be conceived of in the premises. Beggary itself might be content with the terms here proposed, counting that free enough and generous enough which might be had for the coming and the taking. Anything *less* than this can not be thought of as a condition of possession.

But what is meant by *coming* and *taking*, in regard to spiritual benefits, seeing that the language obviously is figurative? If in ancient Armenia, hard by where

Eden was planted, there was another Paradise, which God had prepared for the redeemed — or a palace of cedar and ivory — if it were reared where once stood the house of Solomon, and from out of these abodes should go forth the word of invitation; if in the fair and gorgeous East there was a fountain which, beyond all ancient fable, had power to renovate wasted life, and the welcome were to all to take of it freely, we should know precisely what was meant; we would cross the sea, we would journey over every intervening land, we would come even to the shining gates, and we would knock and enter in; we would actually go to that living water, and would bend over it, and drink thirstily of its fullness.

But this Paradise of God is not anywhere upon the earth. This river of pleasure, and this fullness of joy, are not to be found anywhere beneath the sun. If we should cross the sea, we should not find them; should we traverse the earth, we could not lay hold of them. They are spiritual. They are invisible. They are ultimate. They are celestial. Nevertheless, the word proceedeth forth from God himself — come and take freely. There is a moving of the mind, a coming or a withdrawing as well as of the body. The mind has its takings and its losings. There are possessions of the soul as well as others which are grasped by the hands. What the mind receives it receives in accord-

ance with its own faculties and capacities. It takes it by the understanding, by the thoughts, by the judgment, by the reason, by the affections, by the confident and cordial preference. Combine these acts and qualities together and you have a description of *religious faith*, the believing of the heart which is unto salvation. All the honor, and glory, and immortality, promised in the gospel, may be had by *believing*. The disrupture which was caused between man and his Maker, was not because God had withdrawn his love from his own offspring, but because man had withdrawn his confidence, and loyalty, and love, from his Maker. By the restoration of these, man himself becomes restored.

We have considered how admirably adapted is the gospel itself to win back man's alienated confidence, gratitude, and love. And now all that is needed, for man to recover what is lost, to secure all which God can give, is, to open his mind and heart to what God has said and done, believing it, acquiescing in it, rejoicing in it, and loving it. Are you startled into incredulity when informed that such vast and priceless benefits are dependent on means so simple and disproportionate? If need be, we might remind you that the same principle of faith, simple as it is, intangible as it is, is essential to success in all the pursuits of this present life; but let us rather hold your thought to this one fact, that the gospel itself actually does suspend all

its gifts — affluent, munificent as they are — on this one thing, and on nothing else. The Paradise of God is ours by our coming and taking it. The simplicity of the act, the easiness of the terms, might well excite astonishment in those who have been looking for some marvellous achievement which would destroy their personal identity. Some, in their expectation of extraordinary and supernatural occurrences, such as took place when Saul of Tarsus was converted, actually overlook and despise the movements of true faith as of little importance. They have faith, without admitting to themselves how great a thing it is.

Well do I remember the day when, for the first time, I caught a glimpse of the great Alps. My imagination had been excited to the highest pitch, in prospect of seeing an object with which were associated such wealth and grandeur of historic memories. We had reached the spot whence, as we were told, the long-wished-for view could be had. Unfortunately, a mass of clouds hung low and heavily in the east, obscuring the object on which we were so much intent. Meanwhile, the sun was bright in the west, and the sky elsewhere was clear and cloudless. Our impatient desire was that the sun might not sink beneath the horizon before the clouds had passed away from that object toward which every eye was bent with strained and earnest vision. At length the fixed and changeless

character of the clouds themselves attracted remark, till by little and little the truth broke upon us that what we had mistaken for clouds were the mountains themselves—seventy miles distant—just as you have seen the white fleecy clouds in the blue summer heaven, assuming castellated and mountainous shapes; and there the great and glorious Alps were lifting up their heads of snow and ice into the clear bosom of the sky. We saw them ere we recognised them. Even so have we known many an honest and thoughtful inquirer after truth, straining every faculty of his mind as if in expectation of some great and exciting act or event—by which his conversion should be accomplished beyond a doubt—disappointed, perplexed, and confounded, at length coming to a perception of the *simplicity* of Christian faith, recognising, at last, the reality of what he had long been tempted to overlook, and astonished to find that in his own bosom for which he had been gazing, as with a telescope, in the uttermost part of the heavens, and with suffused eye he exclaims, "Yea, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Beyond all doubt many a man has overlaid and stifled his own faith by not recognising the importance of that which in itself is so simple, and easy, and common. Even as it was when Jesus Christ came into the world—men knew him not, and received him not—so is it with *that faith* which unites

the soul of man unto God, it often springs into life so unobserved, so meekly, and modestly, that the very one in whose bosom it lives is the last to perceive its presence. He can not recognise what is divine in a human form. He can not be convinced that there is anything important, anything celestial, anything eternal, in that sentiment of faith which now trembles in his bosom. But it is the infancy of life, it is the germ of immortality. Give it air. Nourish it. Exercise it. Strengthen it. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

As we have passed in review the great revealed facts of man's history, do they not commend themselves to the conscience of every reader in the sight of God? Do they not accord with your own experience, consciousness, and necessity? Have you not an evidence of their truth better than all that ever was formed in the schools. In all the unfathomed mysteries of your own being, in all the forebodings and apprehensions of futurity, in all your shrinkings from death and the grave, do you not feel your need of what is found in the Son of God? "I know that thou believest." The power of sense may keep these themes from your thoughts, but you can not give them your sober and honest reflection without admitting that they are true, and true altogether.

Come to them, then, even as you are bidden. Bring

your thoughts to their consideration with filial prayer. If never before you could believe that Christ and heaven were for you, believe it now. Take into your dark and desponding mind this great truth—Christ loves you, and desires your salvation. Let that belief work out its consistent expression in the life. Believing that Christ has redeemed you, strive to live in accordance with that great act and end. Believing that there is a future and endless life, think of it, seek it, set your affections upon it. Believing that there is a Paradise above, pray for admittance there, and live as one expectant of its blessedness. Doing this, you shall be saved. This is the gospel which is preached unto us. Whoever believeth in his heart, and confesseth with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ, *shall be saved.* Eden we have lost, but Paradise we may secure! We know of no terms and no conditions for one which are not for all. Believe; repent; pray. Confide in God, your Saviour. Obey him. Look to him in life and in death. The last words of the Bible are a blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." The last words which came down from the city of God, ere the vision thereof was ended, are, "COME—WHOEVER HEARETH, WHOEVER IS ATHIRST, WHOEVER WILL, LET HIM COME."

The next word which we shall hear from the world's Redeemer will decide and divulge what treatment we

have bestowed on his great salvation. Which shall it be, COME, or DEPART? What an epitaph that would be for a ruined soul for which Christ died — "Ye *would not come unto me*, that you might have life!"

COME!

So may we regard that word with gladness and faith on the earth, that we may hear it again with exultant joy when we stand before the throne of the SON OF MAN.

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